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REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

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Reference Number: 72049224-EO/RFI-00001

Response Closing Date: May 31, 2024

Closing time: 15:00 Hours Manila Time

Notice Type: Request for Information

To: All Interested Parties

This is a Request for Information (RFI) to obtain information, opinions, and recommendations from all interested parties with respect to a proposed water security activity in the Philippines. This is not a Request for Proposals, a Request for Quotation, an Invitation for Bids, or a Solicitation, nor is it an indication USAID/Philippines and Mongolia will issue a solicitation to address the goals, objectives or challenges described herein.

Responses to this notice are not offers and cannot be accepted by the U.S. government to form a binding contract or agreement. USAID will not pay respondents for information provided in response to this RFI. Responses to this RFI will not be returned, and respondents will not be notified of the result of the review. If a Solicitation is issued, it will be posted on SAM.gov or Grants.gov. Parties are responsible to regularly check those websites for updates or solicitations and must respond to such a solicitation separately from any response to this announcement. Respondents are solely responsible for bearing any expenses associated with preparation and submission of their response to this RFI.

Responses to this RFI are strictly voluntary. Parties may respond in whole or in part to the questions herein. Responding or not responding to this RFI will neither advantage nor disadvantage any organization or lead to an organizational conflict of interest in any subsequent solicitation. USAID will not publicize responses nor acknowledge receipt of answers in response to this RFI. Responses will be held confidential within USAID.

Thank you for your assistance and interest in USAID programming.

Sincerely,

Howard Weston
Contracting/Agreement Officer
Regional Office of Acquisition & Assistance
USAID/Philippines, Pacific Islands, and Mongolia

Activity Concept

The new Water Security Activity will serve as USAID/Philippines' initiative to support the Government of the Philippines (GPH) in fulfilling the country's water security goals. It aligns with the GPH's vision of a water-secure Philippines as reflected in the Integrated Water Resources Management Plan (IWMP), approved by President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. in February 2024. Through this new activity, USAID/Philippines and the GPH are envisaged to partner with relevant public, private, and local stakeholders to contribute toward the shared goal of improved water security. The proposed activity will also serve as USAID's primary means of fulfilling the USAID/Philippines High Priority Country Plan.

Background¹

Water is a vital resource to sustaining the Philippines' economic growth, enhancing food security, promoting the health of a growing population, increasing ecosystem resilience, and in some regions, safeguarding fragile peace and stability. However, the Philippines faces significant challenges in closing present gaps in access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), while ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of water for its future needs.

Data from the Philippine Water Supply and Sanitation Master Plan (PWSSMP) shows the continuing need of millions of Filipinos for access to basic and safely managed water supply and sanitation services. Providing sustainable water supply to meet current and future needs is further threatened by decline in water availability and quality. These challenges are rooted in five key constraints that also present important opportunities for the Philippines to achieve long-term water security. These constraints include a) institutional fragmentation and weak regulation of water resources and water service providers (WSPs), b) underinvestment in WASH access and water resource management (WRM), c) limited technical, financial and management capacity of WSPs, d) declining water quality and availability, and e) vulnerability to climate stressors, shocks and disasters.

Goals and Objectives

Provisionally, the overall goal of USAID's new Water Security Activity is to advance the Philippines' water security goals to foster more resilient communities, ecosystems, and economy.

The new Activity will build on the experience and progress of the ongoing USAID Safe Water project by strengthening the collaboration among key stakeholders in the water sector and scaling the use of effective tools and practices that were developed under Safe Water. Additionally, support will evolve toward addressing systemic challenges facing the Philippines and advancing the achievement of water sector goals. The Activity's notional objectives are as follows:

¹ More detailed discussion of sector challenges are found in the USAID/Philippines High Priority Country Plan

1) Water service providers' performance improved for increased access to sustainable WASH services

The focus for this component is the water utility and the quality of WASH services that are provided by water service providers (WSPs), specifically water districts and LGUs. One area of emphasis will be enhancing the technical, financial and management capacity of the WSPs and other capacities needed to deliver efficient and sustainable services to households. To address the resource constraints facing WSPs, the Project will work to mobilize public and private financing for utility-scale WASH and WRM. Support is also envisaged toward improving the implementation of local government basic sanitation programs to ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency. WSPs will also be supported in improving WRM for sustainable water quality and quantity, and incentivizing conservation. Also contributing to this objective is the provision of post-disaster support to WSPs, enhancing their capacity to build back better water systems that may be damaged by disasters and ensuring that these systems are disaster resilient.

2) Institutional processes enhanced for accelerating water security at sub-national levels

This component will operate at the provincial, regional, and watershed levels, focusing on strengthening processes that are necessary to achieve the national goal of universal access. These processes include a) data collection, analysis, and utilization, b) provincial integrated water security planning, c) training and capacity development, and d) financing water source development and management. Direct and targeted intervention to provincial, regional and watershed bodies/entities will be provided to the extent that it will contribute in enhancing and institutionalizing the above-mentioned processes. Active engagement by regional offices of relevant national agencies with provincial governments and other stakeholders will be critical to enhancing the overall functionality of the water sector. Strong coordination between WASH and WRM stakeholders is also desired.

Specific interventions will focus on a) facilitating replication of Provincial Integrated Water Security Plans (PIWSPs) in at least three provinces, b) catalyzing investments in sustainable water source development and management that can support the needs of one or more cities/municipalities, c) strengthening and institutionalizing LGU and WSP capacitation processes, and d) improving management of both surface and ground water resources to sustain WASH services and promote equitable resource allocation, and (e) promoting and institutionalizing incentives for water conservation, where feasible.

3) National water sector institutions, governance, and financing strengthened to enable scaling of actions to increase water security

This component will support GPH efforts to reduce water sector fragmentation to enable achievement of universal coverage and increase national water security. Interventions will focus on a) USG-GPH technical exchanges on data systems and the information architecture needed to facilitate evidence-based decision-making at sub-national and utility levels, b) supporting PIWSP implementation and monitoring in Negros Occidental and Sarangani as the two provinces in advanced stages to inform and advance national scaling, c) supporting national reform initiatives for effective, transparent, and accountable water sector governance and

regulation, and d) enhancing institutional capacity for enforcing policies and regulations toward improved regulatory compliance and sector investments.

Geographic Scope

USAID proposes to concentrate the support to GPH in at least three regions, at least one each for the major island groups of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The regions will be selected based on the following criteria.

- **Water security status** characterized by levels of access to water supply and sanitation services -- using regional averages of all provinces in each region for percentage of households with improved safe water source and percentage of households with sanitary toilet facilities, then each region ranked as Low, Moderate or High with respect to its water security status.
- **Degree of current water security risks** based on vulnerability to multi-hazard risks, climate risks, and governance risks -- using regional averages of all provinces in each region for Multi-Hazard Risk Index² scores, qualitative ranking for climate risks (higher temperatures and water stress), and DTI scores for each province, with each region then categorized as Low, Moderate, or High with respect to these risks.
- **Potential opportunities to optimize sustainability of water sources** based on net tree cover gain and watershed vulnerability -- using regional averages of all provinces in each region for net tree cover gain or loss (2000-2022) and number of the Department of Natural Resources' ERDB (Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau) watershed vulnerability assessments conducted (2007-2022), with each region then categorized as Low, Moderate, or High with respect to opportunities to increase WRM sustainability.
- **Potential for complementing ongoing GPH, USAID or other programs supported by development agencies** -- using regional averages of all provinces in each region for the number of USAID programs/activities with relevance to water security that are present in a province as well as the number of municipalities in each province included in the priorities list for a new planned Department of Interior and Local Government-World Bank program.

Instructions for Submission and Questions

Instructions

Responses to this RFI must be in Microsoft Word or PDF format and submitted by the closing date and time on the cover letter. Please keep responses to no more than 4 pages in length, 12 pt, Calibri font or similar non serif font. Responses must be submitted in English. Please number each page consecutively. While the limit on the length of submissions is 4 pages, we value concise, issue-specific comments.

² From the National Disaster Preparedness Baseline Assessment prepared in 2021 by the Pacific Disaster Center. The Multi-Hazard Risk Index includes Exposure to a range of hazards; Vulnerability of populations to economic, environmental, health, and other stresses; and Coping Capacity of economies, environments, and infrastructure.

Please send responses via email to manila-roaa-rfa@usaid.gov with subject line “RFI # 72049224-EO/RFI-00001 – New Water Activity – Organization Name” no later than the date and time stated on the cover page.

Questions

1. The Government of the Philippines (GPH) is creating opportunities for greater private sector investments to support WASH infrastructure development and water resource management. What recommendations can you provide to accelerate these investments to build climate resilience and advance water security?
2. In the context of building Philippine water security at a systemic level, are there distinct interventions or approaches that might be appropriate for enhancing specific ecosystem services such as surface and groundwater water regulation and purification, flood management, erosion control, carbon storage, habitat provision for biodiversity, etc.? If yes, what are some examples of these approaches and how might they increase overall water security, climate resilience, and aquatic ecosystem health?
3. How do we ensure that marginalized communities and climate-vulnerable populations both benefit from and participate in initiatives to advance water security? What are specific approaches and examples would you recommend?
4. Do you see other non-traditional actors that can serve as critical partners in advancing the country’s water security objectives?
5. What else do you think USAID should consider in designing this new activity to achieve the goal of advancing water security in the Philippines?