The municipality of Santa Maria in the province of Laguna, Philippines has a total population of 32,490 among 25 villages. With a sprawling land mass and a diverse geography from highlands to lowlands, Santa Maris is ideally suited for producing a variety of crops ranging from rice to citrus. Because the major economic driver is agriculture, most of the high-paying jobs are for agriculturalists, soil technologist and skilled farmers. Using traditional farming techniques, locals are now harvesting, coconuts, bananas, coffee, rice and many fruit bearing trees. To celebrate the harvest, Marilag Festival is observed and celebrated in an annual thanksgiving feast. Festivities include costume parades, contests, Filipino games, product exhibitions and other special activities.

On average, 20 typhoons enter the Philippine area annually from June to September, making many areas in the country highly vulnerable to flooding. Santa Maria is among one of the most flood-prone municipalities of the Philippines. Located in a catchment basin where three major tributaries converge, most of the residential houses and commercial buildings are located in the lowlands. During typhoons, most of the villages experience flood heights of up to 2 meters and the local government frequently declares a state of calamity during extreme typhoons. Flooding also severely affects the agricultural business, such as low harvest of rice and other products, disrupts the income most people and causes increasing financial hardship.

Safe drinking water is available in bottles but is unaffordable for many residents. Those who cannot afford bottled water get their drinking water from springs and deep wells. In upland areas, people travel at least 30 minutes to gather water from the wells and springs. Flooding causes contaminants and sediment from runoff to invade the springs and wells, thereby further decreasing the water quality and increases cases of diarrhea among children.
Cabuoan Elementary School

Electrolux provides a community based drinking water system to replace contaminated spring water

“Your water filtration system will be such a big help for us. Attendance at our school is often affected by students who are sick from drinking the water. This causes them to fall behind in their schoolwork and puts them at risk of falling to far behind to catch up the same school year.”

- Ms. Rhea, Cabuoan educator
Cabuoan Elementary School is located in Cabuoan Village of Santa Maria, Laguna. The Village has 450 families living below the poverty line with their main source of income derived from farming, rice planting and raising poultry. A limited number of people are working in government positions, so income is very dependent upon low skilled and seasonal work.

The village and school receive their water supply from a spring and shallow well. Although the water may appear clear, it contains bacteria and other contaminants that cause diarrhea and stomachaches. Amoebiasis is prevalent among students.

Cabuoan is surrounded by small lakes that serve as catch basins during seasonally heavy rainfall. Residents complain about waterborne diseases, such as typhoid fever, athlete foot and leptospirosis, that are caused by the flooding and standing water.

Like other schoolteachers in the region, teachers purchase bottled water in town, but they cannot afford to share with their students. Unfortunately, the majority of students drink directly from the taps.

For a small rural farming community with few financial resources, clean drinking water will no longer be a dream for school children and parents.
Planet Water Foundation is a U.S.-based non-profit that develops strategic partnerships that support Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts that align with four of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Quality Education; Gender Equality; Reduced Inequalities; and Clean Water and Sanitation. Project 24 programs and initiatives support these four SDGs with longitudinal support in each community for five years.

Since 2015, Project 24 is Planet Water Foundation’s World Water Day advocacy and engagement platform that focuses on the world’s critical need to bring an end to water poverty.

“We have so many cases of Amoebiasis among our students. Some students bring boiled water from their houses to make sure they have safe drinking water.”

– Ms. Eloisa Padua, 4th - 6th grade teacher
“It is one of dream and prayer to have safe drinking water at the school for the safety of our students. It is not only a big help for the students, but also to the parents.”
– Mrs. Lolita Mascardo