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.
Talangka Elementary School

Thanks to Starbucks Foundation, children in rural Philippines town will have clean, safe drinking water

“I really want our school to have clean drinking water so that I won’t have tummy aches anymore. My school allowance is spent largely on buying bottled water. When I have no money anymore, I just drink from the tap although I know it is not safe.”

– Cyzie Tagle, fourth grade student
Water filtration installation and hygiene education program to make a big impact at school with few financial resources to purchase bottled water

Talangka Elementary School is located in Talangka Village - a rural community in the Laguna, Philippines area. Like most of the villages in the region, local residents earn a living from farming crops while others make paper mosaic handicrafts that are sold in markets. Most families are living below poverty line.

The village and the school have access to the local water district as their main source of drinking water. However, it is not guaranteed safe for drinking especially after typhoons and the risk of water contamination is high. There are reports of diarrhea and tummy aches among students.

Teacher are buying bottled water from a nearby water station just to help student attendance and focus on education. The money they spend is their own and have been wishing that someday, generosity and kindness will help them acquire a water filtration system.

They are very thankful that Planet Water Foundation and Starbucks are providing the AquaTower system.
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 the focuses on the world’s critical need to bring an end to water poverty.

“The water here has discoloration - especially after typhoon season. I tell my students to bring water from home, but if they don’t bring water, then they get diarrhea from drinking the water here.”
- Catherine Sanchez, sixth grade teacher
“I’d be very happy if the school would be given an AquaTower because two of my children go there. We spend 120 pesos ($2.40 US) a week to buy filtered water, which is a huge amount because we don’t have a regular income. My children sometimes complain of tummy aches when they drink water from school.”
–Alma Tagle, mother of two students