

## Personal Stories of Change

### Rosario Villaluna: A perspective from an NGO representative

*“As for the National Dialogue, there are still some members as well as external stakeholders who are requesting that it be continued as they see it as a useful platform to be kept informed and consulted.”*



Rosario Villaluna, Rory, has been the Executive Secretary of the STREAMS of KNOWLEDGE coalition since 2003. She has 22 years of development work dealing with multi-sectoral poor rural, urban and peri-urban communities, NGOs, local governments, national government agencies and international support agencies. Her work on water and sanitation issues started in 1996 with the International Training Network for Water and Waste Management. She used to be engaged as adviser to the Water and Sanitation Coordinating Office of the National Anti-Poverty Commission which is in charge of overseeing the implementation of the President’s Priority Program on Water. She is now spearheading the preparation of the country’s sanitation roadmap. Rory writes:

My formal engagement with The Water Dialogues started way back in 2005, just before the first methods workshop was organised by the International Secretariat in Johannesburg.

STREAMS was given the mandate by an informal network of organisations to act as the official liaison between the International Water Dialogue and the National Working Group in the Philippines. The first meetings were very polarised. It was not clear what form of private sector we were actually discussing. Manila Water asked the same question – were we limiting the question to service providers like them or were we also looking at the private contractors who were doing different jobs (e.g. pipe-laying, water tank construction, etc). There was also a question of how to handle small private operators, for instance, were cooperatives considered private?

We tried the approach being used in South Africa of developing a common code of conduct for the group. It did not work. Representatives needed to get the formal approval of their Boards and it was not forthcoming. We tried to keep the meetings open – it did not work. There were those who attended with different agendas in mind and the tendency was to influence the meetings to go their way. We reached a stalemate. The National Dialogue almost died. With no clear direction and clearly no funds, we were willing to let it go.

Then the Water Supply Roadmap process started. And because the key members of the National Dialogues were also actively engaged in the Roadmap process, the same questions raised by The Water Dialogues were also raised in the Roadmap process. The same research agenda (focusing on financing and regulatory frameworks) was prioritised and the consultation of key stakeholders was given importance. The International Secretariat of The

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Water Dialogues provided support by helping us reframe our research question and bridge some “troubled waters”.

A few months later, STREAMS in collaboration with the Philippine Water Partnership and the National Water Resources Board, organised a series of roundtable discussions (RTDs) that contributed to the discussion of how sustainable water service provision can be more efficient and reach the poor. Many of these RTDs were funded from our own source funds, with the Global Water Partnership Southeast Asia contributing through the Philippine Water Partnership. These meetings helped develop a common level of understanding of the different models of service provision and the different issues that affect their efficiency and effectiveness. These RTDs led to the organisation of the first national conference of small water service providers (SWSPs), in August 2007. The national conference was supported by the WSP, GTZ, ADB and the UNDP among others. This conference provided the mandate to organise the National Association of Small Water Service Providers (NAWASA) in the Philippines.

Today, NAWASA is a growing national organisation with its own governance structure, programmes and projects. With the continued support of STREAMS and the NWRB, NAWASA is now spearheading the organisation of several annual SWSP conferences. The third event was held last August 19-20 2009. As for the National Dialogue, there are still some members as well as external stakeholders who are requesting that it be continued as they see it as a useful platform to be kept informed and consulted.

STREAMS is now spearheading the development of the Sanitation Roadmap in partnership with the Department of Health and NEDA. It is planning to organise a series of multistakeholder Sanitation Dialogues as part of the process. Maybe we could try the process again with different stakeholders, different focus, different output. We now know that consultation of key stakeholders is important!