



# Quezon City

## Transforming Payatas Dumpsite

**P**ayatas is a solid waste dumpsite in Quezon City. Back in 2000, it was also home to thousands of the city's indigent families. Close to 300 people died when the garbage slid down and buried some of the houses which were clustered at the bottom of a particularly precarious, steep section of the cliff-like hill of garbage during a pouring rain.

The following year, the legislators issued Republic Act 9003 or *The Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2001*, which mandated the closure of all open dumpsites in the country by February 2006. The Quezon City government promptly began to implement pioneering and innovative programs to ensure not only the continued safe operation of the site, but also its successful conversion into a controlled waste disposal facility.

The rehabilitation of the Payatas dumpsite has been a multi-disciplinary and sectoral effort, with the City Government in the lead and the community, the Barangay, non-government organizations (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs), and the scavengers themselves participating in the implementation of the project. The City Government also tapped the expertise and services of government organizations (such as PNOG), the academe (University of the Philippines, MAPUA and the

University of Singapore) and private groups such as IPM Environmental Services, Inc. (IPM-ESI) for the planning and implementation of the project. They worked together in the rehabilitation of the dumpsite to address the City's concerns in Payatas: environmental health and safety, stability of the dumpsite, safety of the surrounding community, livelihood needs of those dependent on the site for income, and compliance with RA 9003.

Constant dialogues and discussions were held with the scavengers and the nearby communities regarding the state of the dumpsite and the necessary developments to ensure their health and safety and the stability of the dumpsite. The scavengers were also provided financing and skills training that allowed them to go into small business ventures and prepare for alternative livelihood, in anticipation of the closure of the disposal facility.

With the cooperation of NGOs such as the Homeless People's Federation Philippines, Vincentian Missionaries for Social Development Foundation, Inc., Star of Hope Philippines and the IPM-ESI, almost 1,000 families living along danger zones adjacent to the dumpsite were relocated. Various organizations are also helping the City Government

provide healthcare, non-formal education and livelihood opportunities to the scavengers and nearby communities.

In 2004, the conversion of the dumpsite into a controlled waste disposal facility began. It involved several measures, such as reshaping the slope of the garbage heap, stabilization and greening, drainage system improvement, fortifying roadways and access to the site, gas venting and recovery. In May 2006, the City Government implemented the Final Closure Plan for this facility. In 2007, the Quezon City Controlled Disposal Facility Biogas Emission Reduction Project was approved and registered as a Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) under the Kyoto Protocol by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change last February 1, 2008. The project, an offshoot of the earlier Gas to Power Generation Project, involves extraction, collection, processing, flaring and conversion into electricity of the biogas emissions at the disposal facility.

The program is pioneering. Quezon City is the first Urban Center to implement the Solid Waste Management Act. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Special Award given to the QC-LGU in August 2004, recognized the LGU's "promising and innovative program in achieving environmental



improvements with the conversion of the Payatas Dumpsite into a Controlled Facility and being the first in the country to capture methane gas from the dumpsite as an alternative energy source, thus ensuring the health and safety of the community.”

The program for dumpsite rehabilitation remarkably improved the dumpsite’s operational efficiency, cut down operating costs and at the same time made the facility safer and more environment-friendly. Aside from the DENR award, the City Government has received several other commendations for the rehabilitation program, which has made the Quezon City Controlled Disposal Facility a laboratory and showcase for solid waste management initiatives and a model for other LGUs.

Many LGUs continue to visit the disposal facility to see first-hand the development of the dumpsite and to learn, and possibly replicate, the measures and practices applied by the City in the successful rehabilitation of the dumpsite. The Payatas dumpsite has become a destination and a must-see in Quezon City for students, both local and foreign, as part of their learning experience, and for other visitors who simply want to see the vast improvement in the disposal facility.

Clearly, Quezon City has created the model by which other local governments, not only in the Philippines, but also in other developing countries, can successfully manage and maintain a safe, controlled solid waste facility. The remaining challenge for the city government is how to give

new life to Payatas after the closure of the dumpsite. 

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CONTACT

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