

Laura Ralston Interview via phone conversation – 9/2010

Summary

- *The water quality is poor
- *Existing technology is supported by working with local organizations
- *Only systems that have an existing supply chain for parts and operating supplies are used
- *People in Haiti generally know how to treat their drinking water, but will not adopt regular practices of doing so until they are shown that their water is not safe
- *There is a community belief that chlorine is bad for you and will cause cancer
- *Diarrhea is a normal part of the life of every child
- *Drinking some treated water and some non treated water is dangerous
- *Haiti outreach is one of the organizations that water.org supports, they drill and maintain wells and have contracts with community responsibilities
- *Water systems have a high failure rate
- *After the program that was providing the system ends, it is up to the community to maintain the system
- *A successful water system must have transparent system of operation, trust, budget, funds collection, financial ethics
- *Most important tool to provide water to the people of Haiti is community involvement

All facts from interview with Laura Ralston, Program Manager for the water.org Haiti Projects

- *Water.org partners with local organizations to provide support to them to install shallow or deep wells, sisterns and or testing and treatment
- *They use existing or available technology, where there is a supply chain in tact already
- *No reliable sources of power - no power grid
- *Use generators and solar panels and people sell time on the power sources
- *The water quality is poor
 - People may know this, but do not actually believe there is a problem and wont take it seriously until they are shown proof
 - People know how to treat water, or can find out very easily
 - Emphasis is on education
 - The resources may or may not be available to treat the water
 - most water goes untested, especially away from the coast

*Obstacles with people

- Cultural beliefs that chlorine is poison and that it will cause cancer
- It is dangerous to treat water if it is not treated all the time
- People understand the bacteria problem and build a resistance to it.
- Diarrhea is normal for all children

*Haiti Outreach

- Local organization that water.org works with
- Drills wells, good engineers, good drilling
- Most importantly, very good with community
- Support and manage systems also

*The failure rate of systems is high

- community support is absolutely necessary
- must have transparent system of operation, trust, budget, funds collection, financial ethics

*Everything is demand driven

- If the people do not ask for it, they will not be interested, and they will not care.

*Obstacles

- Mostly Social/Political
- Technology is available
- Political problem could be that a group of people do not want a water system due to cost to community, so the politician will side with them even though that means no clean water
- If another group comes to provide water at a lower cost or no cost due to another program, the community will abandon the current system and go to the new well
- Communities may display jealousy over programs in other areas
- Improper financial planning
- Embezzlement and internal conflicts
- Maintenance - after program ends and community must take over the maintenance
 - person responsible for maintenance may not be getting paid
 - may be using personal resources to maintenance system
 - how is the system supposed to be supported

*Requires a community management system

- must set up rules

- must set up fund collecting and accounts
- Once a program is finished, the local groups or government can take over operation
- Takes a long time to build the relationship between the program and the government in order to hand of care of system
- Water Quality is poor
- People may can not ""see"" the problem
- Most people already know how to treat water, or can find out easily
- Once people are shown the results of testing their drinking water, they are more likely to participate in treating their water
- When it is free, it is acceptable to everyone, when it costs money, there is less demand

*Types of systems

- chemical or filter, depending on location
- there are a great many non-functioning filters
- automatic chlorinators may be installed to wells
- Public water authority may take over at program end

*Critical to success

- Transparency
- Setting up system correctly from the start
- Full support of the community
- Reciprocity of management sharing information

*Referred to Mike Ritter at Deep Springs International

- Water treatment products in Haiti for years