

Background

Our team of five will spend this semester designing and building a solution to our identified problem: lack of access to safe drinking water in developing areas. Our design criteria are low-cost, and low-maintenance. While we are in the early design phase, we are conducting interviews with people who may be able to provide an insight that will help us foresee difficulties, and arrive at a more effective end product.

These questions are intended to be open-ended; any experience or input you have, even if it is only tangentially related to our cultural or technical question, will be greatly appreciated.

Questions

We've heard that sometimes a lack of access to clean water can have complex cultural effects, such as strengthening or weakening familial and religious feelings, and that these sorts of effects can even act as barriers to proposed solutions to their water issues. As a professional in the water field, do you think the creator of a solution has a moral and/or professional responsibility to take these cultural issues into account? To what extent?

One of our proposed solutions is a solar still. An obvious problem with this solution is dealing with a still's effect as a concentrator of pollutants in the source water. This creates a problem somewhat analogous to issues with sludge and solids disposal in modern wastewater treatment. Assuming a part of this solution is a way to address the concentrated pollutants, what sort of specific challenges do you think such a solution would face? Do you think the specific issue of concentrated pollutants could be appropriately addressed by education of end-users, or would it require a technical approach?

Do you have final thoughts or input you would like to give to aspiring engineers and designers working with water?

Afterword

Our team would like to extend our thanks for your support in our efforts! This interview may be completed at your leisure, as our design process will continue until around the middle of October, but the sooner we have your professional input, the sooner it may guide our process. Please do not hesitate to contact with any questions!