

Water For People's International Programs Group

The Denver-based International Programs Group sets the course for Water For People's work in the developing world and works closely with in-country staff to strategize and implement all project work.



Ned Breslin, director of international programs, joined Water For People in 2006 after spending 16 years in the water supply, sanitation, and hygiene sector in southern Africa. Ned brings strong management skills coupled with a proven record of innovation, implementation, and field experience. He earned his M.A. degree from the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa, and a B.A. from St. Lawrence University. Ned is readjusting to American life with his wife, Lindsey, and daughters, Kimberley and Jemma. Due to his passion for sanitation and associated technologies, Ned is affectionately known to his coworkers as "Mr. Toilet."



Kathy Miller, international programs coordinator, joined Water For People in 1991 as the organization's first staff member. Over the years, Kathy's duties have included everything from project management to fundraising to newsletter editing. Today she is focused on monitoring project development, tracking project funding, project reporting, and general support. Kathy is looking forward to 16 more years with Water For People.




Kate Fogelberg, associate manager of regional international programs, is responsible for overseeing Water For People's work in Central and South America, including Bolivia, Guatemala, and Honduras. Kate joined Water For People in 2005 while working on her master's degree in International Development at the University of Denver. Living in Madagascar piqued her interest in community development and health, and she has since worked with NGOs in East Africa and Central America. Kate lays claim to a famous uncle who has been known to sing a song.



Wende Valentine is associate manager of regional international programs for Africa and Asia. Her role includes management of Water For People's work in Malawi and India. Wende joined Water For People in 2003 as she was completing her master's in International Development from the University of Denver. She earned her B.A. from Skidmore College in New York. Wende is passionate about community development, basic human needs, and cross-cultural understanding and has lived, worked, studied, and traveled in nearly 40 countries. She lives in Golden, Colorado, with her husband, Jake. The couple is expecting their first child in August 2007. She is showing . . . and glowing.

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VOICES FROM THE FIELD

spring 2007



News about Water For People's work in Guatemala, the Mayan heartland of Central America.



GUATEMALA AT-A-GLANCE

Population:	12,293,545
National language:	Spanish
Per capita income:	\$5,200
Life expectancy:	69.38 years (male, 67.65 years; female, 71.18 years)
Access to safe water:	95% (92% in rural areas)
Adequate sanitation facilities:	61% (52% in rural areas)
Under-five mortality rate:	45/1,000 live births

Source: World Factbook and UNICEF 2006

The main focus of Water For People's Guatemala program is to assist rural communities with the construction of new water systems and latrines, the restoration and modernization of existing water systems, and the continuation of organized hygiene education programs.

Village Health Education in the Central Highlands of Guatemala

by John Niewoehner, Water For People-Guatemala

About an hour after the paved road ends and the dirt road begins, you will find the remote village of Salquil Grande in the Ixil region of Guatemala. Few would guess that this remote village is home to a motivated, organized group of people who are teaching preventive health and hygiene to people in the surrounding Mayan villages.

Water For People first learned of the Vi'tostixh (pronounced Vee-to-steesh) organization when a group of farmers told us that they wanted to enroll in a school for village health workers. Water For People was pleased to see people taking this initiative and readily agreed to help pay their travel expenses to and from the distant training center. Over the past six years, all of them have completed the program and now want to share their health knowledge with their neighbors.

In the Ixil language, Vi'tostixh means "Above the Old Church," referring to the location of its office. Over the past year—thanks to a Water For People grant—



Health promoters learn how to use hygiene education tools to teach others about good hygiene practices.
Photo: © Water For People / by John Niewoehner



A Vi'tostixh member gives a health talk to community members.
Photo: © Water For People / by John Niewoehner

Village Health Education (continued)

Vi'tostixh has been giving weekend health classes to village health promoters and traditional midwives.

As required by the Health Ministry, the villages where Vi'tostixh works have designated community members to serve as volunteer village health educators. Typically these educators don't receive any formal training to fulfill their responsibilities. But with the training given by Vi'tostixh, the educators are now able to share preventive health messages such as the importance of hand washing, keeping latrines and houses clean, and eating nutritious food. For each health promoter trained by Vi'tostixh, dozens of families will learn life-saving health practices.

A recent meeting with Vi'tostixh was attended by a representative from the Ministry of Health who endorsed Vi'tostixh's activities and expressed gratitude for Water For People's support.

In fall 2006, Water For People and Vi'tostixh held a number of planning workshops to help develop a long-term program for health training. As Vi'tostixh members work to define their goals, they will also develop strategies to achieve them. In 2007 Vi'tostixh plans to continue training village health workers and midwives. They will give health talks at community meetings and will launch a hygiene education program in 25 village elementary schools. These classes will incorporate visual aids that demonstrate how diseases are transmitted and why hand washing is so important.

To assist Vi'tostixh in developing an effective hygiene education program, Water For People plans to employ a hygiene

education specialist this spring who will help Vi'tostixh start a household latrine construction campaign. Water For People hopes to connect Vi'tostixh with other Guatemalan health organizations and train its educators to write grants so they can develop a sustainable funding base. Water For People's accountant will assist Vi'tostixh in tracking expenses and preparing financial reports.

Since the members of Vi'tostixh live in their program area, they have firsthand knowledge of community needs. In addition to their hygiene education program, Vi'tostixh is helping families construct smokeless woodstoves to further improve the quality of life in the villages. Traditional woodstoves generate significant smoke, a primary cause of respiratory diseases—the number one killer of children in rural Guatemala.

Vi'tostixh plans to start a medicinal plants training program. Felipe, a Vi'tostixh board member, is an expert in the Mayan tradition of cultivating and using medicinal plants. Vi'tostixh told Water For People that they would also like to train community leaders on the finer points of the much-discussed Fair Trade Agreement. Although these activities fall outside of Water For People's mission, its assistance in program development, fundraising, and accounting should help Vi'tostixh realize these other worthwhile goals.

It is Water For People's good fortune to be able to help this group of Mayan farmers address health problems in their communities. How long will Vi'tostixh's programs continue? According to its mission statement, "Vi'tostixh will be united for the Ixil people until they find a way to have a meaningful life."

Plotting the Future

Water For People Employs Mapping Technologies to Plan Work

Water For People is piloting an innovative program that will use state-of-the-art mapping technologies to assess needs and determine precisely how and where it will work in the future.

The mapping initiative will be carried out by Water For People's local nongovernmental organization (NGO) and government partners, our international and Denver staff, and volunteers through Water For People's new Water Corps program. Teams will visit communities in targeted regions within each program country to map existing water sources and acquire baseline information regarding water and sanitation status for future planning.

The mapping initiative will entail physically marking all water points, along with their operational status, on a GPS system. Once all points are mapped and analyzed, the maps will become the basis for planning to determine areas of greatest need and for resource allocation. To facilitate local involvement and responsibility, the maps will be shared with all stakeholders, including local governments, nongovernmental agencies, and community members, with the ultimate goal of meeting full water and sanitation coverage in each community over a specified period of time.

Teams will assess existing water resources to determine if they are functioning per government standards, in need of rehabilitation, broken, or if there is no improved source. Water quality tests at each source will also be conducted. In a similar fashion, sanitation facilities will be evaluated to determine community needs and the type and condition of the existing infrastructure.



Volunteers will use hand-held GPS units to precisely map all existing water points.
Photo: © Water For People / by Wende Valentine

"This initiative will provide Water For People with valuable data for planning existing and future work with local partners," says Wende Valentine, Water For People's associate manager of regional international programs and the project leader for this initiative. "Based on the collected baseline data, Water For People will be able to strategically allocate resources where they are needed most and plot progress in any given region to show tangible results."

"We are looking for two to four skilled volunteers per country," says Valentine. "Volunteers should be familiar with GPS and GIS technologies and familiar with the culture and, when possible, the language of the country they will visit."

Several mapping trips have been planned for 2007, including Honduras (March), Malawi (August), Bolivia (September), and India (November). Interested volunteers can apply on the Water For People website at www.waterforpeople.org. Look for the "Water Corps" link.



Photo: © Water For People / by John Niewoehner

Greetings from Guatemala, a Colorful Land of Contrasts

My name is Edgar Fajardo, Water For People's country coordinator in Guatemala. Since I started in September 2006, I have been challenged with setting a course for future activities in the Guatemalan highlands. We have been very busy in the last few months establishing a new office in Santa Cruz del Quiché and working closely with local governments and NGOs to develop much-needed water and sanitation services.

Although Guatemala is relatively small, it is home to 24 different ethnic groups, each with its own language, customs, and dress. One of the biggest problems in Guatemala is the large gap between rich and poor. In the not-so-distant past, ethnic differences and economic disparity resulted in civil war. It's been 10 years since peace accords were signed, and we are now developing a peaceful society.

The same geographic isolation that helped create our diverse cultures has also been an impediment to development. Dirt roads have only recently been built to many remote mountain villages, finally allowing access to the outside world and the opportunity for commerce. Schools are being built to educate our children. And with the help of organizations like Water For People, many villages now have a safe water supply. We have a long way to go. The lack of water, latrines, and knowledge about hygiene contributes significantly to our high infant mortality rate.

We know that these problems won't be solved overnight. Our government is assisting the efforts of communities to gain adequate water and sanitation. But with 10,000 villages dotting the Guatemalan countryside, it is a formidable task to reach them all. Guatemalans are deeply appreciative of your help as we work to create a society in which childhood deaths from water-related diseases are a rarity instead of the norm.

As a member of the Water For People team, as a Guatemalan, and as a father, I am strongly committed to solving our water and health problems. I am in the fortunate position of seeing positive changes taking place in my country. On behalf of the many hardworking Guatemalan villagers we serve, I extend heartfelt gratitude for all of your generous and ongoing support.

Muchas gracias!

Edgar Fajardo

Our mission: Water For People helps people in developing countries improve their quality of life by supporting the development of locally sustainable drinking water resources, sanitation facilities and health and hygiene education programs.

Our vision is a world where all people have access to safe drinking water and sanitation; a world where no one suffers or dies from a water- or sanitation-related disease



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