

Evaluating the Impact of Water Purification Units



Project Information

My global independent study was a partnership with Clean Water for the World (CW4W), an outside evaluation firm, and Asociación Unidos Por La Vida, a social service agency located in Quiché, Guatemala. Our team visited many communities in Quiché that currently have water purification units from CW4W. We collected data through focus groups to better understand the impact CW4W's water purification units had on health, education and the local economy.

Description of Agency

Clean Water for the World is a non-profit organization that provides water purification units to communities abroad. In order to receive free water purification units, communities need to demonstrate a plan to sustain them. Asociación Unidos Por La Vida partners with communities and water promoters in Guatemala to ensure sustainability and upkeep.

Outcomes

The team created an evaluation report that was delivered to Asociación Unidos Por La Vida staff in hopes they will utilize the findings to better support local communities with upkeep of the purification units and access. One major barrier community members identified was that culturally, Guatemalans are used to serving their drinks warm. Since the water units disperse cold water, many people do not like to drink from them.



A member of the evaluation team conducts a focus group with community members.

Miranda Kharsa

University of Michigan School of Social Work



Skills Utilized & Developed

- Program evaluation
- Focus group facilitation
- Scribing
- Non-biased report writing

Classroom Connections

- SW 683: Program Evaluation
- This course taught me best practices of conducting and scribing for focus groups. These practices include: refrain from voicing your own opinions, keep talking to a minimum, encourage the whole group to speak so everyone's voice is represented, and refrain from any body language that may provoke biases (i.e. nodding head)

Lessons learned

- The community is the expert
- Listen more than you speak
- Disseminate evaluation results in a collaborative way

Career Connections

This experience made a huge impact on me both personally and professionally. I learned how to translate my skillset in a completely different environment,. Additionally, I gained experience conducting an international evaluation, this being something I hope to continue as a I move forward in my career.

Advice

I would advise students to take time before their trip to study the history of the country they are visiting. This will provide context for the current situation. Additionally, I would encourage students to be attentive to the local news of the area they are visiting both prior and during their trip.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the School of Social Work Global Studies Office for funding my independent study and everyone at Asociación Unidos Por La Vida for being incredible hosts.

