

Development and Potapak

Safe water is vital to the developing world, as only 50% of the world's population have access to it. Contaminated water is host to 80% of the world's diseases: at any one time **50%** of the world's hospital beds are occupied by those with water and sanitation related diseases. Provision of safe water has beneficial effects that can be complemented by a development programme, which is an essential aim of Potapak.

Although safe water supplies are a necessary condition for achieving improvements in the rural economy, they are by no means sufficient in themselves to promote, sustain and maintain rural development. Water projects need to be part of an integrated development package including education, health, employment and good governance whilst positively engaging against the barriers to development.

There are four main areas to focus on:

Health & Hygiene

Health is one of the most important reasons for investing in water, sanitation and hygiene. The majority of infectious diseases in developing countries are transmitted through water. This means that careful use of water and improvement in its quality can prevent or reduce many of these water-borne diseases.

Hygiene has been defined as the behaviour of individuals in the management of excreta and cleanliness. There is an increasing consensus that the health benefits of water supply come from changes in the hygiene they promote. When water taps and latrines are conveniently located people are likely to wash more often and to practise safe excreta disposal. Behaviour changes like hand washing with soap and preventing contamination of drinking water are not automatic, they need to be promoted and form part of a health education programme. Improvements in hygiene and the quality of the water supply significantly reduce the incidence of water-borne diseases whilst enhancement of the quality of the environment will help to eradicate water-based diseases. Education about the pollution that can occur between collection and use of stored water, about food handling and washing after excreta disposal should result in a reduction of disease. Hygiene education could be arranged through a local management committee. Developing effective links with community health service and local health workers will ensure that the education is carried out on a continuing basis.

Health education as part of a development programme will increase people's knowledge about sanitation and health, in general; so safe water will impact on people's health directly.

Education & Training

Involving teachers in the project will help in educating children in hygiene, inculcating good practice, and could also be a method of general education e.g. Children could be taught science – considering the physical, chemical and biological constituents of water.

Geography, history and sociological developments could be taught through looking at the way in which rivers have carved their route through the countryside and the development of communities along riverbanks.





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Allowing grown – up children to manage water from Potapak and involving younger children in simple tasks will teach them management and organisational skills for use in later life – this was particularly successful in an orphanage in Honduras.

Training in the use and maintenance of the equipment will increase the skills base, give the community control over its assets and produce a modicum of income for the person involved.

Gender / Social Issues

Gender refers to the socially constructed aspects of differences between women and men. It is related to how men and women are perceived and expected to think, not because of biological differences, but through the way society is organised. As water is fluid, so are the social constructions, which shape women's lives - gender, class, ethnicity and personal experiences flow into and out of one another determining the flow of the river of their lives. From caring for children and the sick, feeding the family and working in agriculture and industry until death, the basic element of water is an apt material from which to come to an understanding of the variety of ways "women's" lives are constructed.

Gender has rarely featured in the water sector, perhaps through a misunderstanding of its concept. Women disproportionately bear the burden of the unpaid chore of fetching water yet remains excluded from participating in water projects, except in the most marginal role, and from the opportunities of creating wealth with water. In order to redress this inequality, women must be brought into the planning process. It is therefore necessary to conduct legal literacy training on women's rights to develop their understanding of water rights.

Women, assisted to a large extent by children, particularly girls, traditionally carry out water collection in rural areas. Rationing and the basic decisions about where it should be collected from are decisions taken by women. There is also the health benefit of replacing contaminated water by clean water. Health problems arising from contaminated water affect the health of children and contribute to infant and child mortality. Women are most affected by this because of their caring role and emotional involvement with children.

If the position of women is to be improved in traditional societies, they must have a crucial role in controlling resources such as water. Therefore women should be encouraged to be involved in the planning, maintenance and operation of safe water systems.

Economics

The provision of safe water has a big payoff in terms of efficiency - hours that were spent collecting water, or recovering from illnesses, could be spent more productively. From an economic point of view clean water could be a catalyst for starting new businesses hence a catalyst for economic development.

As a water treatment system, Potapak is ideal for developing countries. The process requires very little training in maintenance and involves no chemical, power or expensive spare parts. Potapak Limited not only supply these high quality water treatment facilities but also back its installation with inputs into locally devised development package(s) that will educate the community in sanitation and the use of Potapak, improve the role of women and foster economic development. The development package is infinitely flexible. It can be a short-term programme to educate people on how to maintain Potapak and thereby provide a modicum of rural employment or a longer-term programme incorporating many aspects of mother and child health, education, training involving gender issues and economic development.

