

Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication
University of Oklahoma
V Infopoverty World Conference
Issues Paper for Conference Seminar
“Innovations Through the Use of ICTs in Distributing Safe Water”
May 12, 2005
Time: 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
23rd Floor Conference Room DC-2 (2 UN Plaza)

Background

During this International Decade of Water more than 1.1 billion people continue to be without safe water. More than 2.4 people do not have working toilets and an estimated 22,000 people die daily due to diseases associated with polluted water. The millennium goals of connecting the world's villages by 2015 and reducing by half the number of people without access safe water will be examined in the context of how ICTs can be used to improve the delivery and use of quality water to the world's villages?

While poorest villagers suffer from lack of water access, the more fortunate populations enjoy an abundance of information on safe water that can be made available to the village in even the most remote corner of the world. Experts know how to: find water in the most challenging geographic areas; make water safe; introduce distribution plans; and initiate policies that are most effective in all settings. There is also an abundance of information available on delivering safe water under the most difficult of local circumstances to those in greatest need. However, one of the greatest challenges remains – delivering information to where it may be used at a local level by village residents.

Issues

- 1) How can ICTs contribute to the Millennium Development Goal of reducing the number of people with access to safe water by half by the year 2015?
- 2) What are the critical information needs of the most remotely located villagers regarding access and use of safe water?
- 3) What are the sources of information that can be delivered by ICTs to the most remote villages to increase access to safe water and ensure that effective practices are used?
- 4) What are the partnerships among NGOs, private organizations and local officials that should be developed in order to ensure that residents in the most remote villages receive information through ICTs?
- 5) What can organizations such as OCCAM, using an ICT focus, do as they enter the World Summit on the Information Society to contribute to delivery of information that will result in increased access and effective use of safe water?

The meeting objectives are consistent with the mission of the Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication (OCCAM) to assist the poorest villages in the world in

bridging the digital divide. The seminar will explore safe water issues at the policy, research, and technical levels. Panelists will use the vast body of information on safe water that is already available on both safe water and ICTs to show how ICTs can be used to respond to local needs for clean safe water.