



## **A New CARTHA Initiative: Innovative Models for Global Health Literacy Education** **Global Health through the Lens of Water™**

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Water is a human imperative. Water sustains life, and we are intimately connected to its dynamic ebbs and flows upon us, around us, through us, and within us. Water makes culture, and we translate its various uses to confer meaning to the words of existence: to quench our soul, to thirst for knowledge, to open the floodgates. Despite our dependence on this essential resource, humanity's intimate relationship with water is under threat.

Both a scarcity as well as an overabundance of water has resulted in global humanitarian crises. According to UNICEF, a vast swath of humanity—nearly a billion men, women, and children—lack access to clean water on a daily basis, due to an interplay of several complex factors. At the same time, however, an abundance of water—floods, water-logged areas due to poor drainage, clogged sewers, sanitation problems, consequences of climate change and natural disasters, etc.—has led to community displacements and the spread of water-borne diseases<sup>1</sup>. The scale and complexity of water-related health issues demands a multidisciplinary approach thereby creating greater awareness and higher likelihood for cross-sector participation that generates pragmatic solutions. CARTHA's new initiative *Global Health through the Lens of Water* aims to produce a series of thought leadership dialogues and programs that represent innovative models for global health literacy education.

### **RATIONALE FOR INITIATIVE**

The collaboration challenge in tackling the problems of water-borne disease is enormous, and demands integrative mechanisms to connect multiple communities-of-practice. Yet, academics and professionals as well as the publics who are interested in helping address health disparities in general, and international health concerns in particular, are not routinely taught about the health effects on individuals and on communities of water scarcity or water abundance. CARTHA's initiative themed *Global Health through the Lens of Water™* aims to bridge this curricular/training gap and thereby build a network of Collaborative Doers around these themes. This initiative will address the following themes:

- How does water drive the factors that affect human health, globally?
- How does water (and its effects on human health) bring together cross-sector partnerships involving a range of professionals and academics who wish to advance global health causes?
- How do we define and shape professionalism in such contexts? How is professionalism maintained by the academics and practitioners working in these global health fields?
- What is the role of research and universities in developing, managing, and leveraging technological and social innovations to address water shortage and water/waste overabundance issues?

### **PROGRAM EFFORTS UNDERWAY**

CARTHA's new initiative will produce new models and Glocalizer™ forums—including through our first student chapter CARTHA at Berkeley launched in 2011—by drawing in case study experiences from literature, media, science, medicine, and public health. The conception of our new initiative (*see on next page*) follows CARTHA's pattern of collaborative doing and arises directly from CARTHA's insights gained from the following series of seminars and symposia:

- ❖ Boston (Feb2008: Annual meeting of American Association for the Advancement of Science)  
Symposium: *Humanity at the Nexus-Academic Partnerships & Entrepreneurship in Global Health*
- ❖ Chicago (Feb2009: Annual meeting of Amer. Assoc. for the Advancement of Science)  
Panel: *Thirsting for Daily Sustenance: Public-Private Partnerships for Global Water Access*
- ❖ Chennai (May2009: Seminar at Indian Institute of Technology-Madras)  
CARTHA Fellow & Rotary Ambassador Scholar Luke Juran on *post-tsunami resettlement districts in Tamil Nadu and issues re housing, water, sanitation for displaced populations*

Additional planning and implementation efforts are underway. For further input, we are currently reaching out to individuals who have been uniformly supportive of CARTHA's work, and have also participated as speakers or in other volunteering roles to help with our programs. We are also seeking ideas and participation from other individuals and groups (i.e., academic faculty, professional societies, and conference organizers) to further develop new programs.

**If you are interested in partnering with CARTHA on this initiative or helping support CARTHA in any way, please call Usha R. Balakrishnan at 319-248-9625 or send her an email at [cartha.global@gmail.com](mailto:cartha.global@gmail.com).**

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<sup>1</sup> Further details on these diseases such as typhoid fever, cholera, trachoma, amoebic dysentery, campylobacter, rotavirus, hepatitis A, bacillary dysentery, hookworm, ascariasis, trichuriasis, enterotoxigenic E. Coli strains, giardia, cryptosporidiosis, and infection rates is available at [www.wateradvocates.org](http://www.wateradvocates.org) and WHO websites.