**Empower Summer Report—***Tufts Clean Water Initiative*

The Tufts Clean Water Initiative, a sub-group of Tufts Timmy Global Health, worked this summer to strengthen and expand our clean water project for the La Victoria community in Buena Vista, Guatemala. Using the funds provided by Empower, we were able to return to the community in order to provide new filters, record primary and follow-up health surveys, conduct stool samples to quantitatively measure water-borne illness prevalence, and investigate the immediate and lasting financial impact of the project. These observations and experiences have enabled us to engage in a comprehensive conversation of how to best move forward with the project from both a health and community empowerment perspective.

Following the extensive research and preparation that led up to the project implementation, five members of the group worked in-country for one and a half months this summer. Molly Goodell and Patric Gibbons made a preliminary visit to La Victoria to speak with members of the community and hear preliminary feedback on the project. Rebecca DiBiase, Lucia Smith, and Nitin Shrivastava were then able to meet with families to discuss the functionality of their filters and the impact it has had on them and their community. As we walked around Buena Vista, we were graciously welcomed into each home and offered refreshments as the families described their experiences with the filters thus far. All responded positively in regards to the filters and several mentioned they had already noticed increasing health and financial benefits within their families.

With the help of our partner organization Pop Wuj and community leaders from La Victoria, we held a large gathering for all the women associated with the water project. New filters were distributed to women who had not received them in the spring and a representative from Ecofiltro—the Guatemala-based filter company—was on site to explain proper filter use and maintenance. After, we met with each family to conduct primary or follow-up surveys about water and firewood usage, disease incidence and prevalence, and year-round water access.

In order to quantitatively measure the water-borne disease prevalence in the community, we arranged for a special stool sample clinic at Pop Wuj for all willing participants from the community. Over the span of two days, we collected over 60 stool samples which we then brought to the local private hospital diagnostic lab in order to determine parasite content. Results showed that 80% of the tested population was positive for water-borne parasites, including giardia and *Entamoeba histolytica*. A specialized mobile medical clinic was then sent out to the community in order to provide medication and care to those with disease-positive stool samples. When we return in January, a second round of stool samples will be collected in order to determine the efficacy of the filters in preventing the contraction of water-borne illness.

Since returning to the States, we have maintained regular contact with Pop Wuj and the women’s group as we continue to monitor and advance the project. We are currently organizing an experiment to quantitatively measure the economic relief that these filters provide (in terms of firewood consumption). This data will be crucial as we move forward in developing a more sustainable implementation plan. From our observations on the ground, we have reconsidered our possible partnership with Potters for Peace, a non-profit that works to develop filter-manufacturing sites in rural communities. Based on a number of limiting factors—including the scarcity of materials available to the community and the cost of implementation—we are now refocusing our efforts on more viable options. We are currently considering other models for community-run filter production, including the model proposed by AguaClara. However, like all other components of this project, no final decision will be made until we have consulted with water filtration experts, Pop Wuj leaders, and the community members themselves.

We look forward to working with Empower this year to develop a comprehensive and effective implementation model that combines Timmy’s vision of global health access and a culturally appropriate entrepreneurship framework.