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Columbia University Engages Global Water Crisis

by admin on August 30, 2011

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Research and innovation provide the foundation of any worthwhile attempt to meet the challenges water scarcity presents to areas across the globe, and the [Columbia Water Center](#) (CWC) brings both to bear in a collaborative multidisciplinary approach to the problem.

The CWC was founded in 2008 with a three-year \$6 million grant from the PepsiCo Foundation for the purpose of studying the causes of the global water crisis from every conceivable angle and then developing solutions based on that research. The CWC places a premium on researching water problems associated with agriculture, but does not allow this focus to compromise its broader vision of solving water scarcity in its entirety.

As a part of Columbia University's esteemed Earth Institute, the CWC expands upon this mission by also [creating educational initiatives](#) using the formidable resources provided by university. Courses are available in Hydrology, Environmental Engineering and more, and the Center also organizes workshops and seminars to engage students as well as the general public.

Unlike purely academic pursuits, the knowledge and awareness created through these efforts is then taken into crisis areas through the CWC's collaborative effort to make real-world differences. The Center's partnership with the Earth Institute allows it to extend its global reach with more comprehensive expertise through the Institute's many Centers like the [Center for Global Health and Economic Development](#), and the [International Research Institute for Climate & Society](#), to name two examples.

These resources create a dynamic force when it comes to employing innovative solutions in areas of distress. The CWC is currently engaged in [10 regions around the world](#) facing various stages and types of water crisis including China, India, Brazil, Mali and the United States.

“Water, a fundamental need for life and industry, is becoming increasingly scarce and polluted. Droughts and floods, exacerbate an already tenuous situation. We recognize that solutions to the challenging water problems often require a critical examination of water, energy, food, climate and economic development issues for end users as well as policy makers. We are developing technologies for global flood and drought risk prediction and impact management, and for sustainable water and energy use solutions to address scarcity and pollution,” said

Upmanu Lall, Director of the Columbia Water Center.

The CWC's holistic approach to solving problems in these areas means accepting that every answer is one that involves history, science, law, public policy and a host of other fields of expertise. It is its ability to navigate these various areas as a unified body that makes it a unique weapon in the fight against water scarcity.

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