

Frequently Asked Questions

This list has been compiled specifically for other organizations and individuals working in Haiti. As our project grows, we receive more and more questions like yours, so rather than quickly responding to many emails, this list was created so that your question can be answered in depth.

Who Are We and What Do We Do?

What does Clean Water for Haiti do?

We have two components to our work: a Biosand filter distribution project and a training center. The filter distribution is managed by sales. We sell the filters for a highly subsidized price, and distribute according to who is willing to make the investment. The training center is for teaching members and workers of other organizations how to start their own Biosand filter projects.

How much does a filter cost?

Each filter costs us about \$50 USD. We build, deliver and install the filters ourselves, so that cost includes raw materials, labor, fuel and electricity. It also includes the costs of our follow up program.

Can we buy filters from you and install them ourselves?

Definitely not. No offense intended, but you haven't been trained, and you will probably do it wrong. You are going to need to do the hard work and build your own filters, but we can help you if you're up to it. Read on.

Can we buy filters from you and have you install them in people's homes in a village/zone of our choosing?

No. We need to focus our efforts locally in order to be most effective. If you would like to see biosand filters in your area, you should consider starting your own filter project.

Will you sell us a filter to put in our orphanage/mission compound/mission school/medical clinic?

Maybe. We really want to see orphanages and missions getting the water they need. One missionary told me that his biosand filter had saved his mission over \$1000USD in

water costs over the years. However, it's logistically difficult to get one or two or three filters to a certain place and install them so we need your help.

The procedure works as follows:

1. Make an arrangement with me, preferably over the telephone (3718-8019) to arrange a pick up day.
2. Show up here as early as possible in the day (our workday starts at 6am), no later than 8am.
3. Pay for the filter(s).
4. Take your filter(s) back to your orphanage/mission along with one of our installation technicians.
5. Help the technician place the filter and then get your people together so he can give basic instruction on how the filters are to be used, in addition so some basic information about sanitation and hygiene.
6. Send the technician home on public transit. You will need to put him close to a transit point if you are a long way out in the provinces. It would be nice to give the technician food while he's with you. The technicians don't like to get home too late, and especially after dark, so keep this in mind when you plan your trip. Unfortunately, if you are too far away, we won't be able to install a filter for you at all because of the logistical problems. In cases like this, we charge the full \$50USD per filter.

If you are abroad, please have somebody here in Haiti contact me directly. It's very difficult to arrange this sort of thing if you aren't here yourself, so have somebody here in Haiti make the arrangements.

Starting Your Own Filter Project

What can you do to help us start our own filter project?

This is my favorite question, so I'll respond in depth. We want to see Biosand filters all over Haiti, and there's no way we can do it all ourselves. That's why we established the training center, and why we put on classes even though it's so much work!

Classes go from Sunday evening until Friday noon. The first session starts on Monday morning at 7:00 am, so students need to come the night before so they can be ready and rested. We provide 3 meals per day and a comfortable dorm with full bathrooms. There is even hot water piped in from the solar hot water heater and electricity with overhead fans. The rooms are screened.

Morning sessions are theory, and late morning and afternoon sessions are practical. Theory sessions include basic microbiology and Biosand filter function. Later in the week we talk about how to run a successful filter project from a management perspective. There is also a session on user education. The practical sessions start

with filter construction and finding suitable materials but we spend more time on how to do a proper installation. As I constantly tell my own workers, an improperly installed filter is just a concrete box with sand in it.

The filter class costs **\$200 USD** per student and includes all room, food and teaching materials.

We can also provide molds to your project at cost. We build and test molds here. The molds are **\$450 USD each**. We also sell tubes and plates (two components of the Biosand filter). These items can be found here in Haiti, but at exaggerated prices, so we import them in large quantities and make them available to other projects all prepared as they are needed at cost.

It takes a lot of work to host a training class, so I strongly encourage you to consider the next question before signing up for one.

What is involved in starting a successful filter project?

It's hard to start a filter project, and it's even harder to start a filter project in Haiti. Even harder still is to start and run a *successful* filter project in Haiti. Clean Water for Haiti focuses on Biosand filters and nothing else but even we have major difficulties at times and discover errors that we have made.

Each filter will cost roughly \$50USD when everything is accounted for. You should count on this when starting your project, even if later on you manage to achieve some economies. If you only want to have a small filter project, 100 filters are the minimum quantity you should attempt to build and install. The first 100 filters are the hardest, however, so I strongly encourage you to plan on continuing your project once it's started and expanding to recipients in surrounding areas.

Even more important than adequately funding the project is finding the right person to be in charge. Frequently with smaller missions, foreigners send the money and have very little involvement after that. With a complicated project like a Biosand filter project, this probably won't work. In a typical example, a foreign group will connect with a Haitian pastor and put him in charge of a Biosand filter project and send technicians of his choosing to be trained. The pastor may be a very capable and caring leader, but because he has a church to run and a congregation to cater to, he is unable to put the time and attention into running a filter project and the project never gets off the ground. Clean Water for Haiti has solved this problem by using full time in-country directors to directly oversee the project.

Concerning tangible items, you need to have a work area with a plentiful water supply. You will need to bring in the right sand and gravel, which is normally done by the dump truck load. Sourcing materials in certain parts of the country can be problematic, but only rarely impossible. You will need a secure place to store tools, molds, and bags of cement. You will need some form of transport for the filters. It's possible to carry 2 filters on a mule, or 1 on a donkey, but normally it's much more

practical to use a truck. CWH uses 2 1/4 ton or 3 1/2 ton trucks with folding sides for easier access. The larger trucks can carry 34 filters, which is about how many filters the technicians can install in a delivery day.

In the past, we've found that many of our filter have gone into disuse some weeks or months after initially being installed. This can be mostly resolved with two important things. First, the filter should be sold instead of merely given away. This makes it much more likely that the family receiving the filter will consider give it the importance it deserves. Also, users need to receive education, not only on delivery day but also on follow up visits. We *try* to visit each filter three times after installation day: 1 month, 3 months and 1 year after installation. It doesn't always work out according to schedule, but when we do our job right, each user received some sort of instruction 4 times and it virtually guarantees that the filter will be used a long time. The follow and education part of your program is something you can't afford to leave undone! A filter that isn't being used isn't any good to anybody, but it still uses up donor funds.

Why don't you build community water filtration systems?

In the case of a community system, the community has to choose to take care of it. The communities in Haiti rarely have the resources to take care of a large filtration system, and in some cases these systems may even be purposefully sabotaged. Household filters are a way to give individual Haitian families the capacity to filter their own water, from whatever source, regardless of what their neighbors do or what type of government is in charge of the community.

Why did you choose the Biosand filter instead of a different type of filtration?

We're a development organization, so our goal is to help people live better lives over the long term. The biosand filter is the most practical filter for Haiti over the long term. As a household filter, it's not affected by Haiti's lack of infrastructure. It has a high flow rate, requires no replacement filter element, and can filter even turbid water. It doesn't need electricity to operate and it can be used by even the youngest members of the household.

What kinds of source water can be used in the Biosand filter?

In many parts of Haiti, locals drink right out of irrigation canals which are highly contaminated with fecal matter. In others, the water is clear but is still contaminated enough to give serious illness. The more fortunate people are able to use piped water, but this water is contaminated as well, only to a lesser degree. The Biosand filter works well with all these types of source water. The Biosand won't removed dissolved minerals, however, which means that a very salty well or sea water can't be treated.

Are all of the materials necessary to build a biosand filter available in Haiti or are they being donated/imported?

We believe that a big part of development work should be based around using local materials and investing in the local economy. Most of the materials are basic things like sand, gravel and cement. All of the materials necessary are available in Haiti, although we choose to import about \$2 worth of material per filter as a cost savings and because we can't always find the quantities that we need in country.

Well Drilling

Why don't you drill community wells?

We don't drill wells for several big reasons. First, we know that if we divide our attention, the filter project will suffer and we decided we would rather do one thing really well than a few things a little well. Next, drilling community wells requires a certain degree of community involvement, and it is very difficult to work with a community. Specifically, it is very hard to find people willing to take care of a well once it is drilled. I'm not sure how many wells in Haiti are permanently out of commission due to community negligence, but it might be over 50%. We stopped our well drilling program in 2005.