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11.479J / 1.851J Water and Sanitation Infrastructure in Developing Countries  
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Water & Sanitation Infrastructure in Developing Countries  
Policy Memo 2  
Topic of Your Choosing  
*General Guidelines and Example Topics*

**Guidelines**

In your memo feel free to discuss either a real-life case with which you are familiar, or to create a fictitious scenario. In general, good memos should **address a variety of constraints & tradeoffs** that are typical of real-world situations.

Memos can employ a variety of standpoints, for example you could imagine yourself as working for an NGO, working for a bilateral agency such as USAID, a multilateral agency such as the World Bank, a government employee, a consultant, --*any* stakeholder (or advisor to stakeholders). You could even imagine that you are a consultant who specializes in negotiation, and you have been asked to help two disagreeing sides find common ground and resolve an issue. Feel free to use your imagination, but try to be realistic in your portrayal of the situation and the constraints that shape your suggestions.

Grading will be based on the criteria in the feedback handed back with your last memo.

**Examples**

Below are examples of the kind of situations that you can create for your memo:

You are a Program Officer for a development NGO based in (region of your choice). You have been asked to make recommendations for a program to address sanitation needs in a specific village (or slum area) where open defecation is the norm for the majority of families. Some wealthier families have pit latrines, while none have pour flush latrines or piped sewerage. (You can invent the reasons for this lack of infrastructure).

Your organization has limited funds and does not have the means to provide large-scale infrastructure. Address your memo to the Regional Director of your NGO. You can create more specific details for your scenario (such as the organization does or does not have specific types of expertise—such as technological, community organizing, political lobbying, etc.) You may want to consider issues such as:

1. What types of **technologies** are suitable to the local
  - a. Culture?
  - b. Terrain?
  - c. Climate?
2. What will be most **cost-effective**?
3. What are the existing **capacities** of your organization?
4. Is there a possibility of **partnership** with government, private sector, or other NGOs?
5. Would policy analysis or political **advocacy** be appropriate in this setting?
6. How will any new infrastructure be **maintained**?
7. What is likely to be most effective in reducing the **disease** burden?

8. What will be most convenient and **appealing** to users?
9. What kinds of **participatory methods** might be employed?
10. What might be the impacts on existing **power imbalances** in the local society/community (i.e., gender, class, caste, ethnicity, ability, age, etc.)?
11. **Who** stands to benefit (and who stands to lose) from various options?
12. What type of **time frame** do your recommendations entail?
13. Are **phased** interventions possible?
14. What are the publicity/fund-raising **incentives** of your organization (i.e. what do your donors hope to see in your work)?
15. What are the **long-term** impacts of the choice (for example if suggesting pit latrines, what will happen once they are full)?
16. Are there options that have the potential for positive **spillover** effects (no pun intended with previous issue!), such as creation of local jobs?

Additional topic ideas:

It would be very interesting to look at water or sanitation provision for a region in conflict. What special constraints do interventions in conflict areas face? What kinds of interventions are well suited to conflict areas (fast, adaptable, portable)? Who is most impacted by conflict? How does conflict relate to water & sanitation?

Similarly, it would be interesting to see some memos on provision of water and/or sanitation services in refugee camps. How do you rapidly design and implement basic water and sanitation provision for a large (and growing), densely concentrated population where infrastructure is lacking? What types of infrastructure reduce the likelihood of disease outbreaks? How can organizations employ appropriate participatory measures in emergencies?

Another similar topic would be provision of water or sanitation services to post-disaster communities. For example, one could invent a scenario (or build on a real-life scenario) in the aftermath of disasters such as the Gujarat earthquake, the tsunami, or other disasters.

Another potential topic would be the privatization of water. Imagine yourself as a decision-maker (or advisor to decision-makers) who is a stakeholder on one or another side of a local debate. What are your incentives? What is the issue you face (are you trying to provide water? Are you trying to make money? Are you hoping to receive water at a fair price? Etc.)

Another approach to the memo could simply be to propose a plan for a local municipality to adopt a new technology. For example, memos could build off of the Chilean fog harvesting case. A memo could create a plan for a successful fog harvesting program. If taking this approach to the memo, I would be sure to **focus on a number of variables** (as in the list above) rather than making it too easy for yourself. **The point of the memo is to practice providing specific, concise policy advice under tough situational constraints.**