Understanding Design Practices Humanitarian Development Projects

Humanitarian development projects involving technological solutions have seen inconsistent and varied success in recent decades. In many cases, designed technologies fail to be adopted by local communities. The current literature in this field is large, but there appears to be a lack in understanding of best-practices that promote adoption of designed technologies. This research takes an initial step in identifying best practices by aiming to understand current practices used in the field.

A set of about 60 case studies have been collected from several peer-reviewed design journals. Each case study highlights the design process in a humanitarian development project involving technology design for solving food, energy, or water issues.

The study will require the use of qualitative research methods to capture and analyze written content from the case studies. An initial set of codes have been generated based on coding of the water-related case studies. These codes need to be refined and applied to all case studies. As case studies are coded, thematic analysis will be used to identify themes that will serve to answer the research questions.

The research assistant will analyze design practices described in the case studies and compare analyses across cases for inconsistencies and themes.

This research assistant position will require 10 hours per week of work, will compensate at $12/hr, and will start this semester (W16). Interested students should send a paragraph description of their interest in the topic along with brief background and any related credentials. Please email Matt Vedrin at vedrin@umich.edu for questions or to apply.