The Problem
Knowledge and research gaps exist in developing countries in a wide range of topics including health related issues, air and water quality and monitoring, water treatment, drought and other water, sanitation, and hygiene programs (WASH). These developing countries face roadblocks as it pertains to their health and sustainability of environmental resources, especially water. Developing countries are challenged with increasing populations which not only equates to more people needing access to clean water, but increases the demand and likeliness of conflict across poor and tensioned communities as well. Another issue that needs to be addressed is the overall poor water quality that exists including contamination and sanitation. Finally, global climate change poses new risks to the supply of water in these developing countries. An expected decrease in rainfall, coupled with an increased supply of usable water needed for drinking, sanitation, and irrigation shows just how necessary action is. Addressing these issues will allow for reduced poverty, more accessible water resources, and support developing countries to achieve public health and socioeconomic improvement goals.

Vision
The overall vision of CIWAS is to grow DRI’s capacity to provide both information and the technical capacity to governmental and non-governmental organizations working to identify and solve problems related to human health and management of environmental resources, especially water. Offering efficient and positive WASH solutions can be done through effective use of technology by raising awareness through media coverage, using the latest methods and equipment, and the transference of knowledge and information through short courses and workshops.

Global Reach
The Center for International Water and Sustainability at DRI will focus on the knowledge and research gaps that exist on a global scale. This program will also engage in action research focused on addressing water, sanitation, and hygiene programs (WASH) issues in developing countries.
With a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation DRI has created a new Center for International Water and Sustainability (CIWAS) that is implementing four main objectives to address gaps in knowledge, research and human capacity that exist in developing nations.

1. The first objective is to undertake capacity building activities on water and environmental management issues focused specifically on challenges in the developing world. This will be accomplished by offering short courses and workshops that will be conducted at DRI in Reno, NV. Additionally, semester-long graduate and under-graduate courses will be offered at the University of Nevada, Reno that will focus on the needs of students and professionals wishing to work in the international development sector. DRI and UNR will develop programs with African Universities to build up capacity, as well as explore existing networks for African WASH NGO’s. DRI is identifying areas for capacity building and knowledge management. DRI has a successful history of developing long-term, well-funded research programs.

2. The second objective is to engage in interdisciplinary, applied environmental research focused on addressing WASH issues specific to developing countries. Not just focusing on water, DRI research will be directed toward topics including climate change, desertification, especially in West Africa, and WASH programming.

3. The third objective is to develop and disseminate relevant information to enhance human development and environmental science in developing countries. This will be done by developing web-based catalogs of publications that range in topic from emergency response to climate change. Furthermore, DRI will disseminate guidelines on best practices created from work done in developing countries.

4. The fourth and final objective is to provide consulting services to funders, including the Hilton Foundation, and international NGO’s on the technical aspect of WASH interventions. DRI will provide advice on areas to invest in the water sector and on the design of future water initiatives.