Instructor’s Note
Flint, Michigan: Lethal Water
2017

Overview
The 2014-2015 toxic water crisis in Flint, Michigan, was a disaster with profound health implications. A complex network of interrelated factors contributed to the disaster: culture, ethics, society, environment, politics, urban design, economic justice, and governance—both the governance of health as well as non-health-sector governance issues (such as political decision making about finances) that affect health. The accompanying materials and associated links and educational tools aim to help users understand these multiple contributing factors and think about how governance and global health connect.

The Flint crisis is not a simple problem; its causes cannot be blamed on just one or another individual. And it does not have a simple solution. Certain corrective and preventive actions are absolutely essential, and yet many of its consequences—especially for children affected by lead poisoning—are irreversible. The opportunity to think through this complex situation can help students better understand health challenges globally—both within the United States and around the world.

This Instructor’s Note is designed to accompany the following related tools:

Preparation Materials:

- Case study: “Flint, Michigan: Lethal Water”
- “Flint Water Crisis Wheel” graphic

Classroom Activities

- Discussion questions
- Suggested Role Play Exercise

Additional Flint Resources

- Links to external sources (embedded in the Case and its concluding Bibliography)
- Links to related materials on the Flint crisis created by the Global Health Education and Learning Incubator (GHELI) at Harvard University and links to external materials in the GHELI Repository.
Learning Objectives

- Understand how and why there is a complex network of factors that led to the Flint water crisis;
- Understand that health issues may be caused by events beyond the traditional health sector, and that solutions for these issues must also be found outside of the health sector;
- Understand that seeking a solution to Flint's water crisis requires coordinated collaboration across diverse sectors of society as well as governments;
- Understand that the issue of lead-poisoned water is a concern that extends beyond the community of Flint, is an issue for many US communities, and is relevant to other water crises across national boundaries;
- Consider multiple issues of water, including: human rights; the role of governments on ecological resources and utilities/infrastructure; citizen action; and health related to economic development.