

ENGINEERING *our* EXISTENCE

CASE STUDY

ENGINEERS WITHOUT BORDERS UK



NIALL NOLAN

Rainwater Harvesting Systems Engineer

Although Mexico city is built over five large lakes, the 21 million people that live there face serious water shortages due to sewage contamination of this vital resource. Engineers Without Borders UK is working with Isla Urbana to install systems that capture the rain during the wet seasons and store it for use in the dry seasons when there is no rainfall at all. These are known as rainwater harvesting systems. Engineers Without Borders UK volunteer Niall was tasked with investigating the potential for rainwater harvesting systems to meet water demand in Tlalpan, an area in the south of Mexico City.

WHAT WAS your favourite part of being a volunteer engineer?

My favourite part of being a volunteer with Engineers Without Borders UK was working on a project that has a real tangible benefit to people's lives.

The opportunity to work directly on rainwater harvesting systems with Isla Urbana was really exciting as this project has not been done before.

HOW HAS volunteering helped your career?

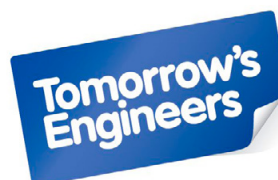
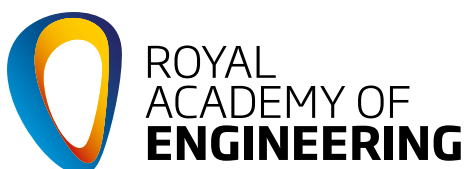
When I finished my placement with Engineers Without Borders UK, Isla Urbana offered me a permanent job. Currently, I am helping to conduct the water quality studies of our systems at the various stages of the water's journey from the roof, through the cistern and into taps.

I have also worked on building a rainwater harvesting tool that we can use to estimate what the potential water savings are for a given system anywhere in Mexico. Without this volunteering opportunity, I wouldn't be where I am today.

WHAT DOES engineering mean to you?

I'd say engineering at its best is when people work together to find solutions to problems that we all face in trying to develop a good quality of life for ourselves, all the while doing it in a sustainable and ecologically and politically sensitive way.

I believe that the role of engineers in the future will be to look for different and smaller integrated ways to find solutions to problems which are friendlier on the planet and help us all live more sustainably.



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