

Danone Communities announces a new investment in Drinkwell to continue developing access to safe drinking water for all



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Paris, July 22, 2019 – Danone Communities, Danone’s investment fund and social business incubator for low-income populations, announces a new investment in Drinkwell, in partnership with the Global Innovation Fund. Drinkwell is a social business whose mission is to facilitate access to safe drinking water in Bangladesh and India.

Four billion people do not have access to safe drinking water worldwide¹ and in Bangladesh in particular it concerns more than 65% of the population. In this context, Danone Communities and the Global Innovation Fund will support Drinkwell to develop access to safe drinking water especially thanks to its innovative resin platform for groundwater capable of consistently removing impurities such as arsenic and fluoride.

Drinkwell focuses on 3 areas:

1. Manufacturing arsenic and fluoride removal resins for groundwater;
2. Providing water kiosks, as well as designing, implementing and maintaining community water systems;
3. Effluent treatment solutions for industrial water systems.

¹ Source: *The untapped potential of decentralized safe drinking water enterprise* – <http://safewater.enterprises>

Drinkwell water kiosks are located in urban areas, serving low income communities lacking access to affordable safe drinking water. To implement its solutions and services, Drinkwell has established a Public Private Partnership with WASA, Bangladesh's main water management government body. Currently active with Dhaka WASA, Drinkwell started discussions with Chittagong WASA to scale up and provide affordable safe drinking water in the second largest city of the country.

Drinkwell plans to have 142 active kiosks by the end of 2019, and eventually 700 kiosks.

Minhaj Chowdhury is the CEO and Co-Founder of Drinkwell. As a Fulbright Fellow to Bangladesh with BRAC - the largest NGO in the world - he researched villager willingness to pay for clean water in 2012. His work has been acclaimed by UNICEF, WaterAid Bangladesh, the U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh Health Secretary, and serves as the basis for Drinkwell's growth strategy. Minhaj Chowdhury holds a BA in Public Health from Johns Hopkins and has won multiple awards from organizations such as the U.S. State Department, SXSW, and others. He is a 2014 Echoing Green Fellow, 2015 Forbes 30 Under 30 Social Entrepreneur, and 2017 Ashoka Fellow.

Developing innovative models to facilitate water access

Together with local experts and entrepreneurs around the globe, Danone Communities is bringing market-based solutions to the communities that thrive for autonomy and development, and it already impacts 4 million people around the world.

One of Danone Communities' priorities is to accelerate access to safe drinking water for all, thus contributing to the UN 6th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

Danone Communities has been a catalyst in spreading the pioneering model called Safe Water Enterprises (SWE). The approach is proven to be a cost-effective mechanism to deliver safely treated drinking water to poor communities. A recently conducted study shows the untapped potential of the SWE model could benefit 200 million people.

In pursuit of this goal, Danone Communities is calling for the wider adoption of the SWE model and further collaboration to help scale the model so more people and communities can benefit from safe and sustainable water.



About Danone Communities (<http://www.danonecommunities.com/>)

Danone Communities is an incubator of business solutions targeting low income communities living with \$1 to \$5 dollars a day with aspirational products and services addressing malnutrition and lack of access to safe drinking water.

Danone Communities empowers innovative social entrepreneurs to achieve sustainable social impact. It does so by investing in social businesses as a minority shareholder, providing capital, technical and managerial expertise. Starting as a historical partnership with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus to develop the Grameen Danone Foods Company in Bangladesh, Danone Communities has continued to invest in social businesses throughout the years from Senegal to Mexico.

To date, the portfolio consists of a total of 12 social business investments made in 15 countries with 4 million beneficiaries. Danone Communities is a catalyst in spreading the Safe Water Enterprise model, also known as water kiosk model.

About Safe Water Enterprise

Danone Communities has long been convinced in both the business and development case for investing in Water Kiosks.

As a key player in the field of Safe Water Enterprises, Danone Communities joined forces with key partners, including Aqua for All, the Hilton Foundation, the Osprey Foundation, and The Family Stone Foundation, to uncover “the untapped potential of decentralized safe drinking water enterprises” [study link: <http://safewater.enterprises/>].

The key highlight of the study finds that SWEs – these “alternative solutions which provide a modular, decentralized approach to delivering safely treated drinking water” – have the potential to be “a significant part of the safe water solution on a global scale as a cost-effective mechanism to serve the poor.”

About the Global Innovation Fund

The Global Innovation Fund is a non-profit innovation vehicle headquartered in London with an office in Washington D.C. that invests in the development, rigorous testing, and scaling of innovations targeted at improving the lives of the world’s poorest people. We believe that the best ideas for solving some of the world’s most critical problems can come from anyone, anywhere. Through our grants and risk capital, we help breakthrough solutions to global development challenges from for-profit firms, non-profit organizations, researchers, and government agencies to maximize their impact and affect meaningful change.