

WATER

AND SANITATION INCUBATION PROGRAMME



Startups for Securing Water and Sanitation

December 2022



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“Individually, we are one drop.
Together, we are an ocean.”

- Ryūnosuke Akutagawa -

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Aqua for All

One of my first field trips as Aqua for All's Managing Director was to Ethiopia in 2019, a country with one of the lowest rates of access to water and sanitation in the world: Only 65% of the households have access to improved water sources and barely 7% of the households has access to improved sanitation.

Despite government efforts, public service providers can only cover a fraction of the enormous demand. Lack of resources and infrastructure limit the capacity of utilities to extend their services to remote and rural areas.

People living in these areas rely on private service providers, but these water and sanitation small and medium enterprises (SMEs) also struggle to expand to make their services more reliable and affordable.

It became clear to me that solving this would require strengthening these enterprises, in order for them to scale and ensure sustainable and affordable access to water and sanitation services.

In partnership with iceaddis, Aqua for All developed the "Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme" (WSIP), which was launched in July 2021. This programme aims to boost the potential of market-oriented, early-stage water and sanitation SMEs in Ethiopia.

"Together, we will continue to capitalise on the synergies between the public and private sector to realise our common goal of making access to safe water and sanitation in Ethiopia a reality for all."

Besides providing training and coaching, the incubation programme prepares participating enterprises to apply for Aqua for All funding. iceaddis is the first innovation and co-creation space in Ethiopia and choosing a local business acceleration provider contributed to making the incubation programme a success. iceaddis diligently supported and guided nine ventures, who fully benefit from this opportunity.

The "Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme" included virtual and in-person bootcamps, and offered technical assistance support. At the end of the programme, all ventures pitched their business plans and unique value propositions during a final event attended by government officials, NGOs, private sector, and financiers.

The "Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme" is part of the suite of acceleration programmes that Aqua for All has implemented worldwide. Each acceleration programme is tailored to the specific needs in a country and implemented in partnership with (local) accelerators and technical assistance providers. The programmes have different formats -incubation programmes, challenges, and training programmes- to help enterprises develop solid and fundable (business) plans and support them in attracting

commercial finance to scale up.

They are implemented in partnership with local accelerators and technical assistance providers. Our acceleration programmes support enterprises in developing fundable (business) plans and assist them in attracting commercial finance to scale up. The participating enterprises are equipped to market their products and services, launch a brand, develop long-term plans and better understand the power of partnerships to make their business a success. These steps are important to empower the private sector to fulfil their role in giving access to water and sanitation to underserved populations, like in Ethiopia.

During our successful mission we are supported by our esteemed partners and we are especially grateful to the Ethiopian Ministry of water and Energy, the Regional Water Bureau of Amhara and the Amhara water utilities.



Josien Sluijs,
Managing Director, Aqua for All

Iceaddis

"The biggest task of the ventures is changing the perception of their consumers."

Source: iceaddis

Despite considerable improvements in the past two decades, the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector in Ethiopia still has a long way to go as indicated by prevailing circumstances. As few as 7 to 9 percent of Ethiopian households are able to access safely managed sanitation and diarrheal diseases are still the second leading cause of under-five illness and death.

The Ethiopian government has set ambitious targets for the WASH sector. As part of its initiative to meet Sustainable Development Goal 6.2 for sanitation, it plans to achieve 100 percent access to safely managed sanitation by 2030, with an interim target of availing 60 percent of the population with basic sanitation by 2025. Additionally, it launched the "Total Sanitation to End Open Defecation and Urination" campaign which aims to make Ethiopia open defecation free by 2024.

The realization of such ambitious goals can't be achieved with government-led efforts alone; it requires active participation from non-governmental organizations as well as the private sector. Moreover, a well-established, market-based sanitation is essential to sustainably overcome WASH challenges.

In line with this, iceaddis, in partnership with Aqua for All, organized The Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme (WSIP) to provide expert support to selected market-oriented, early-stage small and medium enterprises in Ethiopia engaged in water and sanitation related ventures.

The Programme started with an open call where more than 40 ventures that were looking to boost their potential through mentorship, expert and consultancy support, applied to join. Through a two-stage selection process 9 out of 41 ventures were selected to take part and the Programme officially kicked-off on September 1, 2021.

Participants were small and medium ventures engaged in manufacturing and distributing water filters, disinfectants and water-well drilling rigs, innovative easy use sanitations (toilets), sanitary products marketing, as well as a micro-finance extending loans and purchasing access of water filters to its customers.

The Programme started with a 'Startup Diagnosis', a form for collecting additional information about the ventures, a 'Business Development Support

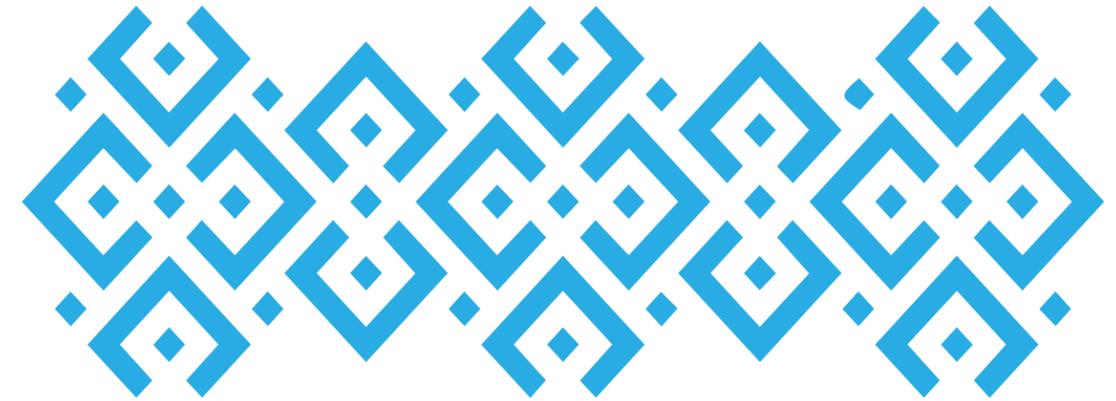
Checklist', a general baseline survey to assess the ventures' need and a business gap assessment. Then followed a workshop seminar where participants came together, got to know each other's businesses, networked, and went through the business gap assessment results.

Presenting a tailored approach that can help ventures expand their services is crucial as WASH businesses face peculiar challenges than other businesses, according to Ashenafi Abreham, Project Lead of the Programme.

"The biggest task of the ventures is changing the perception of their consumers," he said.

Based on the business diagnosis of each venture, and the first workshop, the iceaddis team conducted expert need analysis and assigned mentors and external consultants. The ventures were assigned with experts in business development, content production, communication strategy, branding, website and social media, and legal advisory.

When In Need



The project consultant, Abeslom Samson, who worked with 8 of the participants, stated that the ventures had problems implementing their ideas.

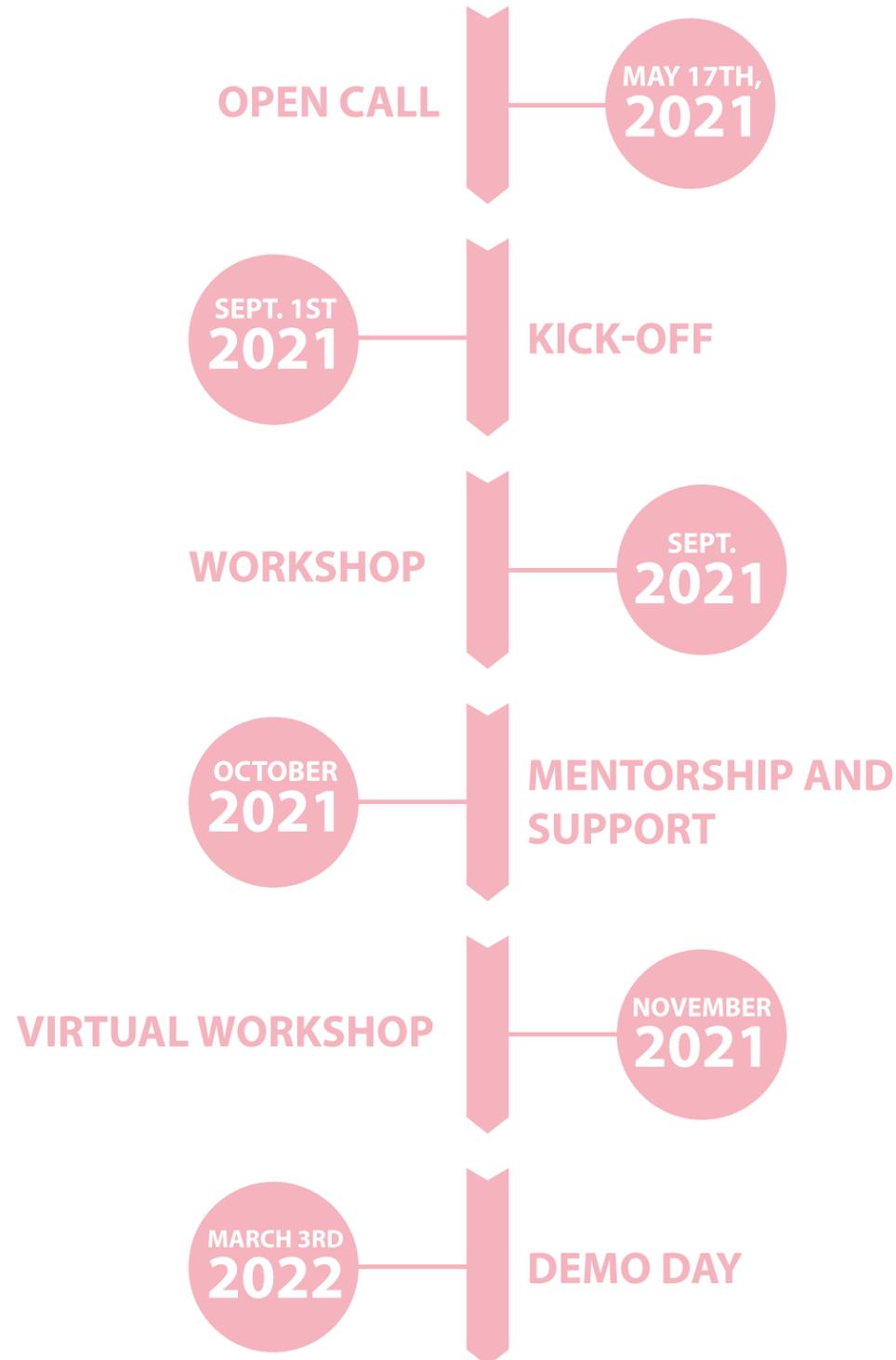
“We sat down with them and showed them ways to implement different ideas, depending on the business nature of the ventures,” said Abeselom, who has traveled as far as 1800kms to meet with the participants throughout the Programme. “We even managed to keep companies open who wanted to shut down, which is a success.”

Access to market and finance are the two most challenging issues for the ventures according to him.

“Reaching potential customers in the rural area is an issue,” said Abeselom. “As well as finding available funds for scaling up and sustaining their business.”

A second workshop was conducted prior to the conclusion of the project, where invited guests shared their experience with incubation, export, and marketing strategy. Attending the event was the Dutch Ambassador in Ethiopia, Henk Jan Bakker, who gave a speech following Josien Sluijs, Managing Director Aqua for All. The Programme was concluded in March with a Demo Day where the ventures showcased their business products.

Although the government is directing more finance towards the health sector, the WASH sector is in particular mostly left to NGOs; this requires strong legislation to support ventures in the sector according to the consultant.



Necessity is the mother of invention, and Getachew Gebre Hiwot's life is testament to that. In 2004, his father-in-law had an accident which changed the course of his life, and work. Because of this injury, his father-in-law needed help in every aspect of his life, including personal care routines like using toilets. This was when Getachew started thinking of ways to ease bathroom commutes for father in law.

He started to experiment with his father-in-law's bed with the aim of fitting it with a toilet on the underside. The modifications allowed the person to use a toilet without having to endure the pain of getting up from bed.

Motivated by the difference he was able to make in his own house, he then decided to offer similar aid to another young girl from his area who was on a wheelchair. After providing an impactful help to two persons with immobilizing injuries, Getachew then realized that many other patients can benefit from similar products.

With the aspiration of establishing a business venture which manufactures special wheelchairs and beds for people who cannot use toilets on their own, he moved to Addis Ababa in 2007 believing that the capital city would provide better access and opportunity to realize his dream.

Getachew was faced with a number of challenges when he started to manufacture the items he had in mind; primarily he incurred extensive expenses in creating molds with which he would fabricate the fiberglass in to the shapes he desired. He chose fiberglass as a main component for building his inventions due to the material's light, user friendly, strong and appealing nature.

The manufacturing process initially took a lot of trial and error as is the case in many innovative products.

“I endured a great challenge and expense while getting in grips with the materials; I also received useful

comments from customers which helped to improve the products,” said Getachew.

Getachew & Ybralem Patented Creativity Engineering has so far managed to come up with over 30 innovative products designed to help patients in hospitals and their homes with sanitation use and mobility. However, the company possesses patent rights from the Ethiopian intellectual property office on only seven of its inventions.

According to co-owner Getachew, the company didn't acquire more patent rights on its products due to a prolonged and time-consuming procedure of patent right acquisition.

Currently, the company produces low water use sanitation products for people with disability, pregnant women and elderly people with mobility challenges.

Their products include toilet seats for pregnant women and the elderly, wheelchair accessible toilet seats, as well



“Businesses often struggle with shortage of demand, but our situation is the opposite, we struggle to keep up with the demand due to our limited manufacturing capacity.”

as movable public toilets and showers, which are bringing the company popular among its customer base.

Many of Ethiopia’s big hospitals, including Black Lion Hospital, are among the company’s customers. Additionally, in collaboration with Addis Ababa mayor’s office, their portable public toilets are being planted around the city’s largest, Merkato.

The company’s manufacturing operation is currently being conducted at a small warehouse run by 13 workers, with two dispensaries around Piassa and Lafto areas.

Although the company has come a long way since its establishment, it is still facing a number of challenges, the biggest of which, according to co-owner Getachew, is shortage of working capital, which is a big obstacle for large-scale manufacturing.

“Businesses often struggle with shortage of demand, but our situation is the opposite, we struggle to keep up with the demand due to our limited manufacturing capacity,” said Getachew.

Under the Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme, Getachew & Ybralem Patented Creativity Engineering received research-based support and consultations in relation to the company’s marketing and promotional materials, as well as business management style.

The Programme has also helped the company in creating a stronger digital presence through social media, website and a digital payment platform as well as training to the staff. As part of the programme’s consultation, the company was able to work on strategizing and attaining working space along with expanding the company’s visibility.

A Dignified Life

Open defecation is a major problem in Ethiopia, as many people lack access to adequate sanitation facilities such as toilets. In Its health care reform plan, the Ministry of Health stated that only 20% of households have access to basic sanitation facility in the country. This results in faecal contamination of the environment - one of the primary causes of child mortality, illness, undernutrition, and stunting when combined with poor hygiene habits. But this problem is not unique to Ethiopia; gobally, at least two billion people use a drinking water source contaminated with faeces.

Where Hawiselet Kassaye was working as a nurse in a rural village, diarrhea was a very common problem. A trained health practitioner, Hawiselet, along with friends, Abdulkadir Amano and Simegn Minilik, investigated the root of this widespread problem and came to a similar conclusion - food contamination from unsafe toilets was the primary cause of sickness in their area. This is when they decided to invest 100,000 Birr and kick off their toilet business.

The company, Hawi Toilets, based in Modjo town, 80 kilometers from Addis Ababa manufactures low-cost toilets and toilet products. Its services

include distribution and installation of toilet products and services such SaTo pans, a toilet pan with a mechanical and water seal that closes off pit latrines from open air, and ventilated improved latrines, designed with extra vent pipe which makes the product the odor and fly free. Their products include eco-friendly toilets made from plastic bottles. The company supplies these sanitation materials to consumers, build toilets, and provides toilet maintenance and repair services.

Hawi Toilet joined the Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme merely two months after establishment. Despite being new to the market and amid concerns that there would not be enough market to enable them to build their business, their idea has demonstrated tremendous growth potential. “What we have learned is if the community is made aware, they are willing to adopt new technology,” said co-founder Abdulkadir.

Throughout the Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme, the main priority for Hawi was to ensure proper business management procedures were followed. During the programme, Hawi’s managers reviewed their

book keeping procedures and got training on business fundamentals such as product pricing and cost tracking.

After several months in the market, managers at Hawi Toilet have learned, that their chosen field is not without its difficulties. Their main hurdles come with scarcity of work spaces and access to finance. The inadequate road network also prevents them from reaching additional household.

“We have tried to reach rural areas in Modjo as far as 15km way from the city,” said Abdulkadir.

New issues that have to do with availability and pricing of supplies have surfaced in recent months, which Abdulkadir says creates production disruption. Despite all these challenges, Hawi toilet is making its mark in the community, having sold about 200 low-cost toilets in Modjo town and its surroundings.



Source: Hawi Toilets

Cascading Solutions



Their products include eco-friendly toilets made from plastic bottles. The company supplies these sanitation materials to consumers, build toilets, and provides toilet maintenance and repair services.

Source: Hawi Toilets

Minch, the Amharic word for “spring”, was the befitting name given to a water filter technology designed by British engineer, Andrew Smith. Backed by years of observation and work with numerous development projects, Andrew came up with Minch to address the critical lack of access to drinking water in Ethiopia; a staggering level, 60 to 80 percent, of all communicable diseases contracted in Ethiopia are caused by inadequate sanitation and hygiene facilities.

The company behind Minch, Desert Rose, found success producing this filter and selling 1,000 units. The portable water filter, which removes germs found in water, was designed with portability, functionality and aesthetics in mind. Such point-of-use water treatment technologies have evolved as a means of enabling people and communities around the world who lack access to safe drinking water to enhance water quality at home.

In countries like Ethiopia, access to safe drinking water also has cross cutting implications, as Samuel Sommer, the general manager of Minch who took over the company, would find out. During his travel across the country, Samuel noticed that women and girls in rural areas were the ones who bore the brunt of this task, walking many kilometers while also lugging heavy containers. These trips to fetch water not only risked their safety but was one of the main reasons that kept young girls from going to school.

It's Samuel's firm belief that Minch and

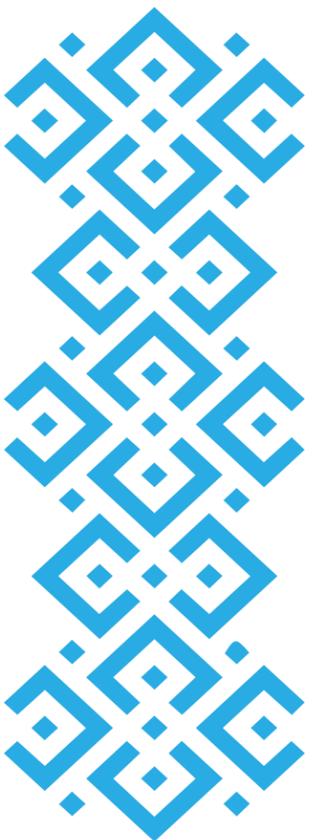
similar home use products can help address these problems.

Under his management, Minch 2.0, a newer model, was developed; this was intended to make local production far easier. Currently, the company has a manufacturing plant in Addis Abeba which began operations in April 2020 with nearly all inputs used for production sourced locally from miners. Minch's latest design is also intended to attract and add urban consumers to its customer base. This includes household consumers as well as bulk users such as hotels, fitness centers, industrial parks. As reaching rural consumers is expensive, the company plans to cross-subsidize the rural segment from urban sales.

Joining the Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme has been significant in the company's marketing and communication strategy for this goal. In line with this, trainings were delivered to Minch's team including practical pitching sessions.

Furthermore, through the support of the Programme, Minch has gained legal advisory support, as it navigates the process to acquire a business license. Lack of a clearly defined legal parameter in the country's investment law, which doesn't explicitly identify where water, sanitation and hygiene companies fall has slowed down this process. In the meantime, Minch is taking the opportunity to continue testing its product by providing samples to consumers.

Source: Minch Filters



These trips to fetch water not only risked their safety but was one of the main reasons that kept young girls from going to school.



Testing the Waters

When one Netherlands-based agribusiness company started importing water filters to Ethiopia, its sole aim was ensuring that its employees were getting easy access to clean water in the office. However, owners of the company, Resilience Water Filters BV, quickly realized the widespread necessity and potential health benefits of using such water filter in Ethiopia. Teaming up with its local counterpart, Shayashone PLC of Ethiopia, they created Nazava trading PLC to take on this undertaking.

In 2019, the company, a manufacturer and a distributor of water filters, became officially registered in Ethiopia and began its operations.

Nazava has so far imported over 10,000 water filters distributed across Amhara, Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region in Ethiopia. Recently, the company built a factory in the city of Bahir Dar, which has started production.

The company has since provided training to nearly 2,000 Health Extension Workers in Amhara region who cascaded the training to over 50,000 members of the Women's Development Army; a group of volunteer community health workers who link and extend essential health services from health posts to households.

Nazava's water filters are affordable and operable without electricity which makes them especially suitable for rural households which are the company's target consumers. But there are now concerns that the affordability might soon be compromised due to inflations prevailing internationally, according to the company's business development manager, Haymanot Genene. This makes partnership with microfinance institutions, to avail consumers with a credit system, more important than ever.

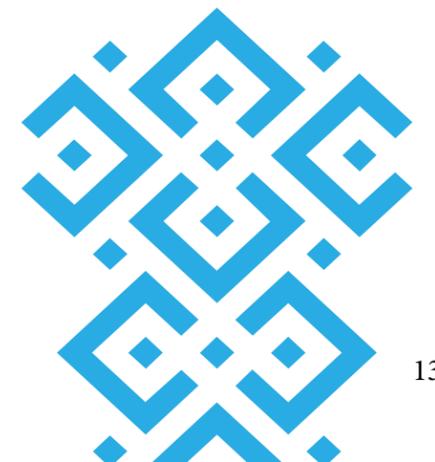
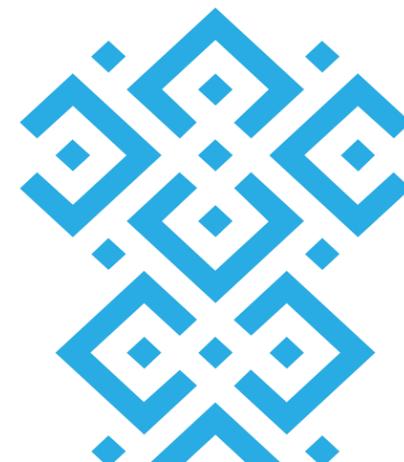


The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector in Ethiopia has several shortcomings. The lack of awareness among the population, scant findings of previously studies, lack of government cooperation and shortage of infrastructures are major problems. Nazava hasn't been immune to this.

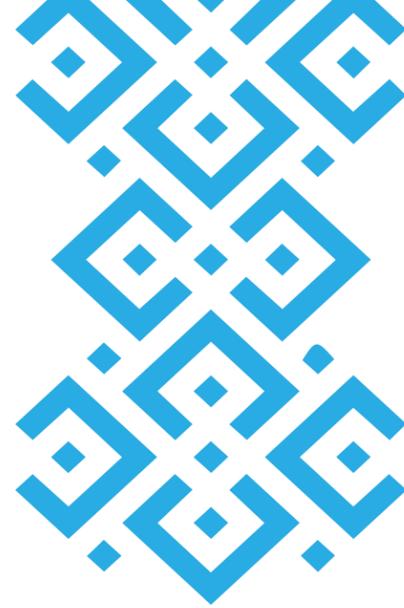
Though Nazava's water filters are WHO-certified, bureaucratic hurdles have set the company back from reaching further heights. Product distribution and sales of the company has been temporarily halted until the company acquires a trade license, a process which is proving to be tiresome due to lack of a categorical classification of water filter producers under the nation's trade laws.

Since 2020, the company has only managed to sell only a few of products it had imported, whilst its locally manufactured products are in stock at its factory in Bahir Dar, awaiting the completion of the licensing process. This, according to Haymanot, is taking a financial toll on the company.

Lack of robust infrastructures and utilities such as water and electricity, shortage of skilled man power and the lack of sufficient cooperation from government institutions compound the problems of operation.



Bridging Gaps



The Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme project was instrumental in stepping in to provide support to Nazava during this time. Most notably, the company was provided with a legal advisor, whose services were crucial in the license acquisition process as well as in many other legal affairs of the company.

product delivering method is a time-consuming,” said Haymanot. “The application will solve this issue and improve our general operation once its completed. Programmes like this are impactful for the betterment of the WASH sector in Ethiopia.”

A marketing application, underway, is expected to ease many aspects of the company’s operation particularly in relation to taking orders, delivering products and reaching out to vendors and customers. “Our current order receiving and

Moving forward Nazava trading plans to substitute imported raw materials by locally mined and produced materials. To make the shift, it is conducting research to locally produce a ceramic candle, an essential component of the filtering mechanism.

Ensuring access to water and sanitation for all; that is goal 6 of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN. In order to meet this universal access to safely managed water and sanitation services by 2030, about 114 billion USD per year of capital investments will be required – in other words, about three times the current investment levels. Closing this financial gap requires a lot of effort including supporting commercially viable businesses in the sector and providing repayable finance.

Businesses like Peace Microfinance Institution play an important role in ensuring that funds reach areas that need it the most; rural settings. The Institution, operational for 22 years, has a majority women customer base.

“We had no more than 400 customers upon launching operation,” said Feleke Borga, Deputy CEO of Peace Microfinance. “Currently, we have 105,000.”

Over the years, Peace Microfinance has managed to grow its paid-up capital to 32.3 million Birr, and disburse 420 million Birr in loans allocated from different sources including donors.

As the majority of their operations take place in rural areas, employees of the Institution often come across health problems caused due to lack of proper sanitation and clear drinking water. Since this issue impacted their customers as well, the Institution became interested in providing a solution.

“Water and sanitation related illnesses impact women and children the most. Our customers were also impacted and failing to repay loans, thus we started supplying water filters and quickly noticed a considerable difference,” said Feleke.

In 2021 Peace Microfinance became an active participant in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector through providing credit for customers to purchase water filters. The Institution also run a similar programme to provide access to solar products with its Pay-As-You-Go mode.

Dubbed “Clean and Safe Water Loan”, the institution launched a credit scheme that engages 3 different water filter suppliers, and provides purchasing access which remains a major challenge in access to WASH services in rural areas.

In addition to water filters, the credit system currently covers sanitation facilities expenses. The Institution provides credit to cover expenses of raw materials necessary for building toilets, as well as labor expenses.

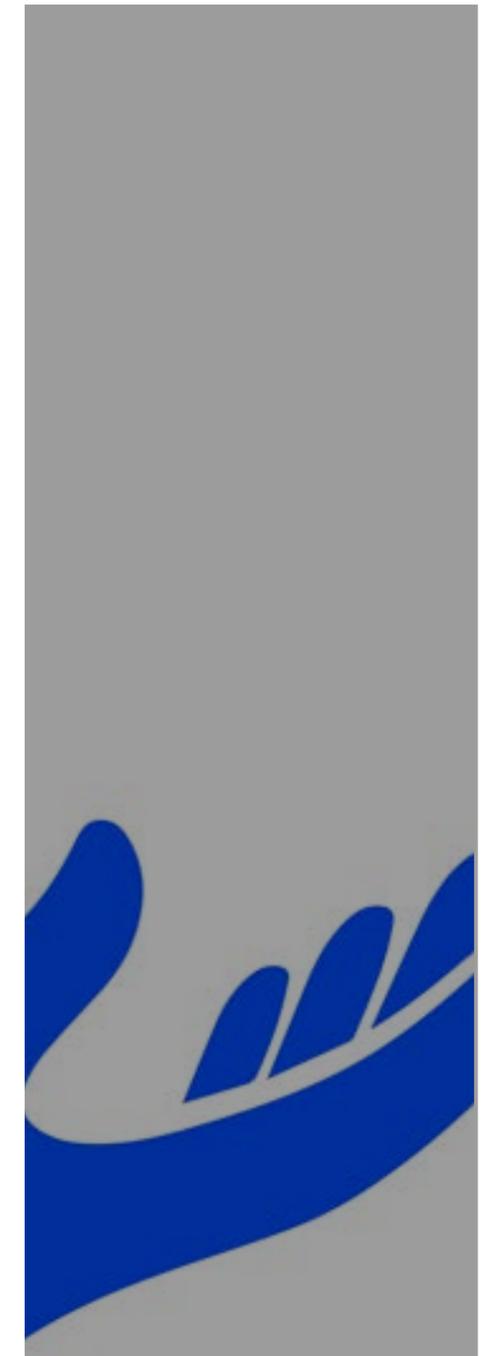
Currently 220 customers have benefited from the credit scheme, with over 200 applicants on hold due to shortage of funds designated to the WASH sector.

Although the institution is making an impact in the sector, the shortage of loanable funds is hindering it from availing credit to a larger number of customers.

Within the Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme Peace received consultation on the need to develop a WASH policy. In order to address the major hinderance – funding – the Programme aided in facilitating a loanable fund to the institution from third party lenders and donors. Additionally, the Water and Sanitation

Incubation Programme has provided several staff trainings, which were valuable in expanding their awareness and understanding of the WASH sector, according to Feleke.

“As financiers ourselves we would be satisfied to secure funding in a form of loan, we don’t necessarily expect a free lunch or solely rely on grants,” he said.



Nazava’s water filters are affordable and operable without electricity which makes them especially suitable for rural households which are the company’s target consumers.

Source: Nazava

Digging Deep



Businesses like Peace Microfinance Institution play an important role in ensuring that funds reach areas that need it the most; rural settings. The Institution, operational for 22 years, has a majority women customer base.

In many areas of the Ethiopia, people have been using traditional techniques of water drilling in the hope of finding groundwater. The problem with manual drilling is that it poses high risk for drillers, and it is not effective with hard rock surfaces.

The International Development Enterprise, an international non-profit, adopted a manual drilling method where drillers operate a machine from ground surface and more than 5,000 wells were dug in Ethiopia with this method. Still, manual drilling was found to be labor intensive and time consuming.

Fasika Afework, a mechanical engineer was among the product developers who engaged in the development of the drilling machines. Having spent close to 15 years in design and development of drilling products, Fasika co-founded his own business, Waterlife Construction PLC. His aim was to develop and manufacture advanced drilling rigs that were less labor intensive, affordable and scalable.

After having drilled 65 water-well so far, the drilling machines Waterlife has brought to the market have proved to be efficient, reliable in hard soil formations and cost about 10 times less than what the market price for imported drilling rig machines. It is also less time consuming; depending on the type of ground, drilling can be completed in one or two days.

The major factors that contribute to the availability and ease of operation for the product is that it requires less skilled manpower to operate, and has low maintenance cost. Moreover, the initial investment cost of the drilling rig machine is cheaper and intended to target the rural household farmers.

Fasika and his team have dug wells in various parts of the country including Amhara, Oromia and Sidama Regions, selecting areas where there is critical shortage of water.

“We have returned our investment multiple times. Organizations are coming to us asking us to dig wells because our products are better,” said Fasika.

Yet there is still room for improvement according to him. Most of Ethiopia’s ground water is located below 40ms, therefore the company is working on an improved version that can reach depths of up to 200m and overcome hard rock structures.

Although the drilling rig is Waterlife’s main product, the company is engaged in designing, manufacturing, training, and selling affordable water technologies and agricultural tools and equipment that improve farming. These products, suitable for multiple use systems like drinking, washing, livestock, & irrigation, are manufactured locally, and easily maintained by the user.

In joining the Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme, Waterlife intended to expand their understanding of business management beyond product development.

“We are all technical people; we don’t know how to sell,” said Fasika. “The programme helped us recognize this gap so we hired a business development manager. We are already seeing the difference.”

The project consultation has also paved way from a potential collaboration between the company and other fellow incubatees in the Programme.

Although Waterlife’s product has achieved a great deal of success, the company still faces numerous obstacles. The market’s limited size has held the company back from winning government contracts, as three companies need to compete under the country’s public procurement legislation. In this case, it is not existent in the market, according to Fasika.

The other challenge for Waterlife lies in difficulty to attain funding to increase the number of machines it operates and fund its research and development efforts.

The Long Arm of Coincidence



Most of Ethiopia's ground water is located below 40ms, therefore the company is working on an improved version that can reach depths of up to 200m and overcome hard rock structures.



Source: Waterlife

Donato Patrissi's arrival in Ethiopia happened by chance. The environmental engineer was doing his master thesis in Zurich when the university he was studying at struck a partnership agreement with Hawassa University. Shortly after, Donato came to Ethiopia in 2018 for a month-long stay to begin his research in Hawassa city, home to half a million people. His one-month commitment has now turned to years.

"I found out some of the problems with water contamination during my stay," says Donato.

Donato major discovery during his stay was that the city's water supply was prone to contamination. According to a 2017 report by the Central Statistics Agency, 14% of Ethiopia's population obtains drinking water from low-risk sources, while 37% gets it from high-risk sources. The same report asserts that 98% of piped houses have low chlorine residuals, indicating untreated water.

In a bid to address the problem, Donato introduced a disinfectant technology that ensured an adequate concentration of free residual chlorine.

'Low-hygiene standards and environmental conditions make it often difficult to prevent water from recontamination. While household water treatment and safe storage practices were associated with reduced diarrhea, they were only adopted by a minority of households. This may be because people trust the water quality furnished by the authorities and consider it safe for consumption since they pay for it,' reads the research published by Donato.



Source: CLARA

The research further indicated that the low-risk perception in the community leaves room for hygiene promotion campaigns. Alternatively, free residual chlorine in the supply scheme could provide a residual disinfectant, but a more consistent chlorination practice should be performed by authorities to provide reliable protection against recontamination, it recommends.

Based on the research, and in collaboration with other organizations including Hawassa University, Donato developed, built and tested his technology which was later implemented in rural communities as a pilot project.

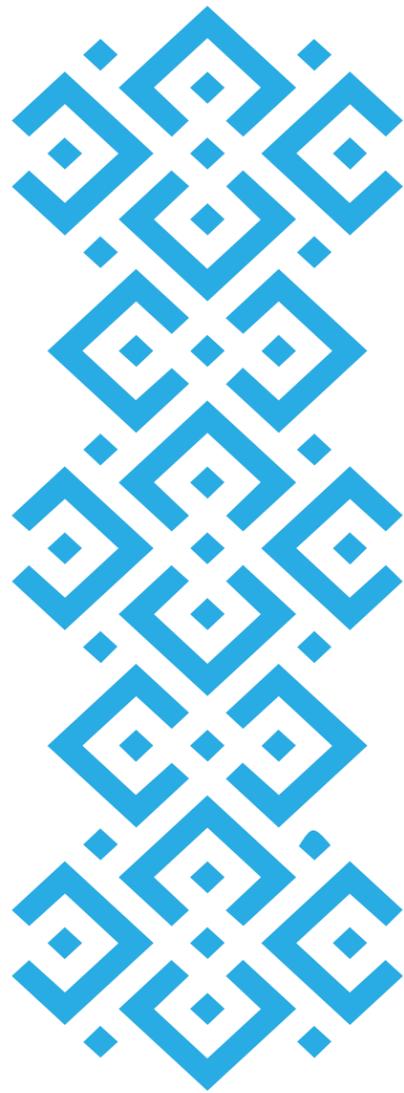
"We had a lot of requests from the general public and NGOs about the technology so we decided to establish ourselves as a business," said Donato.

The product that his company, CLARA, uses and installs in a different location could be easily monitored and administered. The disinfectant technology had built-in solar battery inside the machine as an alternative energy source making it an ideal product for rural areas.

Joining the WSIP project aligned well with the business establishment process CLARA was undergoing. The project provided much-needed legal support through hiring a legal advisor, which helped in navigating the country's investment and commercial law and negotiating with authorities, companies and individuals. "Starting the business was one of

the main challenges,” said Donato. “As was finding the right people in government institutions.”

The project also extended its assistance to foster technical collaboration between initiatives similarly engaged in the sector, including other companies in Ethiopia. CLARA has now started serving customers in Sidama Region and Bahir Dar city in the Amhara Region, with future plans of exporting products.



“Carrying Water Home, Ethiopia” by Rod Waddington is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

The disinfectant technology had built-in solar battery inside the machine as an alternative energy source making it an ideal product for rural areas.

Lasting Solutions

While running a large farm in Amhara region, Getaw Cherinet, a diaspora entrepreneur, started noticing that several of the farm’s employees contracted water borne diseases regularly. The issue was so severe that it started disrupting the farm’s day to day operations. In one of Getaw Ministry’s trips to the U.S., he came cross what seemed to be a solution to this problem back in Ethiopia; water filters. He purchased the water filters, hoping to dress his employees’ health crisis, and started seeing changes in their health.

The success at his farm, and the water filters, was registered by the local authorities in Amhara Region, where his farm was located. The region’s health office approached Getaw with the request to import similar water filters in bulk for distribution in the region. Getaw accepted and opened up Tulip Addis water filter. Today, the company distributes water filters throughout Ethiopia, selling over of 100,000 filters annually.

The Tulip water filter is designed to improve water quality at the point of use. One of the two products available is the Tulip Table Top; a two-bucket water filter and water storage facility that can be used for up to 7,000 litres. The top bucket is filled with raw water, which is filtered through the Tulip candle filter into the lower bucket.

The second product is the Tulip Siphon; a lightweight portable water purifier that, easy to use and store. It purifies 4 to 5 liters of water per hour and can be used in emergency situations as well as for daily usage.

Though the filters were fully imported initially, the company reached out to plastic manufacturers and managed to find products capable of substituting the previously imported jars.

Through the Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme, Tulip Addis managed to get staff training and seminars focused around improving its marketing strategies and models, as well as staff management and development.

The efforts of the company were further supported by the Amhara regional administration, which saw the company’s potential for growth and granted it a plot of land in the town of Debre Birhan, on which to construct a plant.

“We have completed building the construction of the factory,” said Mekonnen Gashe, the company’s General Manager. “We are waiting on a loan to import the required machineries and commence operations. We’re at the final stages.” The factory will start its operation by manufacturing plastic jars whilst components of the filtering system will be imported. This is due to the lack of raw material supply necessary for producing the filter.

“We plan to manufacture the whole product locally by 2023. Even if mining operations can’t be done in time here, we have an alternative plan of temporarily importing the raw materials from Kenya,” said Mekonnen.

However, its operation isn’t free of challenges; most notable is the dearth of foreign exchange and the precarious security situation in several parts of the country.

Although Ethiopia’s stated health policy is to focus on preventive actions, there is little support and recognition to businesses operating in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector; to that end, water filter distribution isn’t even specified or categorized under any trade sector.



Source: Tulip

Hand in Hand

Proper hand sanitation is an essential part of diseases prevention. The importance of hand washing in disease prevention has become more pronounced than ever today with the COVID-19 pandemic. However recent studies have indicated that only about 5 percent of the Ethiopian population maintains proper hand washing practice. The disease burden in the country is also linked with lack of proper sanitation and hygienic conditions like lack of proper hand washing practices.

Beautiful Minds Ethiopia Community Development Work was established by five co-founders in 2016 with the goal to change community perception on sanitation and hygiene. The company piloted its first project in two schools in Addis Ababa and provided students training on basic hygiene and soap use. Under a “Soap Drive” campaign involving parents, the two schools were able to acquire an entire year’s supply of soap for their students.

The hygiene and sanitation school programme has since served more than 30,000 students and continues to educate on hygiene. The company is an active participant in global water and sanitation related events such as water day and global hand washing day as part of its awareness raising work. After founders of Beautiful Minds Ethiopia became included under the Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme, they received support focused on marketing projects, business development and online marketing as well as website development. “We received pitching and other marketing related trainings by a capable consultant,” said the company’s WASH programme manager, Nasser Ferej. “We were provided with an opportunity to create networks with companies working in the sector; this is essential since our work is marketing and distribution.”

The support from the Programme was partly aimed at enabling Beautiful Minds to the development of the sector through research and development. Beautiful Minds used to manufacture and distribute several types of soaps at an affordable price. However, it switched its operation to distribution and marketing of soaps, water purification tablets, and other sanitary things at a small profit margin as shortage of soap supply wasn’t among the main challenges in WASH in Ethiopia. Instead, the company does soap recycling; taking used soaps from hotels, garbage disposals, and other locations and chemically treating them to create a new product.

“Our operations are only in Addis Ababa due to shortage of funds,” said Nasser. “But we plan to expand our operation to rural parts of Ethiopia where lack of awareness is more prevalent.”

The enterprise also aims to distribute affordable, durable, and easily cleanable toilets and is currently creating an association with a local entrepreneur and a manufacturer of the products.



Source: beautiful minds

Beautiful Minds Ethiopia aims to secure funds for expanding its operation through hiring capable marketing staff and distributors, leasing a warehouse and strengthening its logistics capacity to extend the access to communities in remote parts of the country.

The efforts of the company were further supported by the Amhara regional administration, which saw the company’s potential for growth and granted it a plot of land in the town of Debre Birhan, on which to construct a plant.



“The hygiene and sanitation school programme has since served more than 30,000 students and continues to educate on hygiene.”

Source: beautiful minds

Water and Sanitation Incubation Programme (WSIP)

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