

MEET ANTONY KAMOTHO

PUREFRESH



Antony Kamotho, Managing Director, Purefresh

Antony, you deeply care about providing people with access to clean water at pocket-friendly prices. Was there a specific moment that made you decide to take action and found Purefresh?

I was born in the Rift Valley in Kenya where we have very high levels of fluoride in the groundwater. My parents and grandparents made peace with this situation but once I knew that there was a solution, I felt that the next generation shouldn't suffer anymore. After I returned to the Rift Valley following my graduation, I made it a personal quest. Back in 2010, the Catholic Church had heavily invested in a technological solution called "bone char". The problem, however, was that you couldn't really tell how well it worked. I did my own research and found that another solution called "reverse osmosis" promised to be best and very consistent. This is when my desire to buy a tap water purifier kicked in, first for my own family, and later, through Purefresh, for many more.

How was your experience of becoming an entrepreneur? Did you find it challenging to start a company?

Like many entrepreneurs, I had many challenges in the beginning: First, I realized that there was a significant difference between the parameters of the raw water meant for the US-made purifier and the parameters of the local tap water. The next struggle came when more and more neighbours came to our house because they loved our water. We couldn't meet the demand anymore. I was still employed and purified water after work and at night, together with my wife. We realized that we needed to build a sustainable business, invest our savings into a commercial purifier model, borrow money from the bank, and deal with all the business formalities and legislation. It was a steep learning curve in the first three years until our model was stable. Then I quit my employment and dedicated myself full-time to growing Purefresh.

Today, you are targeting low and middle-income, urban, and peri-urban households. Could you describe the specific pain points of your low-income customers?

What counts most for these types of customers are affordability and convenience. They buy in very small volumes but repeatedly, which means that you must bring the bulky water bottles close to

them. But small outlets are not very economical. Therefore, we need to find a very fine line between convenience for these customers and sustainability for us. Also, awareness is a big issue. I still remember when the town where I live had a Cholera outbreak and the water was contaminated very fast. The only area that was affected by Cholera was the neighbourhood where we did NOT have a water outlet. [This was a big turning point: After that, many people finally understood the connection between clean water and water-borne illnesses and became our customers.](#)

The ILF for WASH programme supports you in piloting cashless, container-based outlets to improve this convenience. What is your thinking behind this move?

What we want to achieve is accessing areas faster and in an easily replicable way. If I say replicable, I also mean empowering others to learn from us and implement our model in another region or country. The cashless water vending system we use is a very robust model that we receive from a Dutch company, so we don't need to reinvent the wheel. This solution, however, doesn't really cater to those at the bottom of the pyramid. These people live on cash. So how to reach the poorest of the poor is a challenge that we still need to figure out.



What were your thoughts when you first saw the ILF for WASH call for applications?

We always felt that something was missing in the market – a model that would support ideas that are evolving. What we needed was a partner who would be a bit more patient, give us space to experiment, and reward us for our success. It seemed to me that the ILF for WASH by Aqua for All and Roots of Impact was exactly that – so we applied to test it. [What I can say today is that ILF is indeed a well-thought-through approach that rewards your progress, is patient, and gives you the flexibility to scale an impactful solution.](#) In our case, we received a Revenue-based Impact-Linked Loan, which we begin repaying only in the second year after piloting and refining our new solution. This is exactly what I need as an entrepreneur.

You are one of the first enterprises to use the Revenue-based Impact-Linked Loan. How do you like this specific ILF instrument?

[I find it pretty straightforward.](#) The only thing that took us a bit of time to understand is how exactly the metrics system works: which metrics to use, how to measure them, and how they are rewarded. The tutors in the Impact-Linked Finance Readiness Bootcamp prepared this knowledge very well. I've been almost 15 years in the WASH sector and have a lot of experience with other lenders, so it was relatively easy for me to get the hang of it. For younger entrepreneurs, it might take a bit more time to connect theory and practice. [But once this instrument is understood, I'm sure it will create a lot of progress in our sector.](#)

From your ILF bootcamp and instrument design experience, are there aspects you'd like to see further explored in the future?

I'd like to see a longer time horizon for such a Revenue-based Impact-Linked Loan, for example, 5+ years. This would give entrepreneurs like me more time to adapt a new solution to the market and harness the full impact from it. For future bootcamp participants, it would also be great to have ILF best practices and success stories, especially in the African context, to inspire them. I feel this would

speed up the understanding of this innovative approach and overcome the language barrier, both culturally and technically.

Speaking of the future: If you had all the money in the world, what would you want Purefresh to be?

I would like it to be an affordable, accessible, and convenient place for all communities to access safe drinking water. To achieve this, our model has to be easily replicable across different geographic areas. My dream is to work on converting these technologies and make them open source. Then I can help other entrepreneurs to refine and scale them across the continent much faster than we at Purefresh can do alone.



Interview by Christina Moehrle, Roots of Impact / Pictures by Purefresh