

WASH Talk Episode 18 – Selecting the Right Safe Water Options

Show Notes – July 2018

Introduction

Governments have the responsibility to provide safe water to its citizens. This is embodied in the human rights to water and sanitation. But in many areas, government is unable to keep up with the expanding populations, maintenance of existing water supplies and required monitoring to effectively manage them. Even when they do, water can get contaminated during transport and storage. Treatment at point of use is essential, then, to prevent diarrhoeal disease. Whilst universal service by government is the goal, entrepreneurs can play an important role in building and meeting demand for safe water for households in the medium term. Water can be produced and delivered to households. And filtration and chlorination products can be sold to enable households to do the treatment themselves.

But the landscape on options and their suitability in different contexts is a minefield for governments and the private sector to understand. On this episode, we're talking to two guests who can help us understand this landscape and the range of household drinking water options that are possible.

Fanny Broulloud is Water & Sanitation Hygiene Coordinator for Asia with Antenna Technologies. Antenna Foundation works in science on essential needs for the BOP, which include the sales of chlorine generators and business models around safe water. Fanny comes from an international business and environmental sciences background, joining Antenna in 2014.

Kanika Verma leads the sustainable enterprise team of TARA (Technology and Action for Rural Advancement), which is incubating a social enterprise that supplies safe drinking water to low-income communities. Kanika is an applied economist by training and used to run her own financial investment firm in the US.

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- NGOs need to support government in raising demand for safe water because (a) it often involves complicated technology and (b) there is very low willingness to pay. So, we need very affordable products, a very sophisticated business that can operate on low margins and with high efficiency, and be able to invest in marketing to change behaviour. At the same time, it involves a high level of risk (e.g. political risk, climate change risk).
- From the India perspective, there are 65 million people living without access to clean water in rural areas, and delivering to this population is extremely difficult. TARA was looking for a technology solution which will help them produce and distribute locally through a network of small businesses, so they partnered with Antenna Technologies.
- There is a role for government to raise demand for safe drinking water, but there is not much being done in India currently, which doesn't make sense when considering the burden on resources from ill health.

- In SDG6, government is now accountable for water quality at the household. So, government is needed to certify safe water products and enable wide distribution through the market.
- Working against these market building activities are emergencies, since government and NGOs hand out free products, killing demand for products through the market.
- A good example of government promotion in safe water is in Ethiopia with Aqua for All where the government is the reseller to BoP consumers. They've reviewed the products on the market and selected the ones to support the private sector reach household consumers.
- In India, the government has taken similar measures under the Swachh Bharat programme and listed permitted products on a website, and have launched a massive behaviour change campaign as well.
- The WHO has assisted governments by evaluating all household water treatment products on the market. The program is called Scheme:
http://www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/water-quality/household/scheme-household-water-treatment/en/