

Leveraging micropayment technology to increase access to safe drinking water



The Challenge

Enabling Access to Safe Drinking Water.
More than 780 million people lack access to safe drinking water, particularly in developing countries.

The Match

Cubo Environmental Technologies enables the efficient utilization of water resources through its patented technology for the treatment of drinking water and wastewater.

Susteq's goal is to enable access to safe water via a prepaid water ATM that allows people to pay a small amount for water. The money is used to pay for infrastructure that pumps, treats, and transports water to end users.

The Impact

Through this collaboration, Cubo and Susteq plan to bring safe drinking water to over 20,000 beneficiaries in Nigeria and Kenya by 2019, with the possibility to extend their impact in countries like Senegal and India in the near future.

Portuguese company Cubo Environmental Technologies has developed a compact, modular, containerized technology to treat and supply safe drinking water to small population clusters of 500 to 3,000 people.

The technology allows them to produce safe drinking water from natural water sources, such as surface water and ground water, at an affordable price. The equipment requires very low maintenance and operation skills, making it easy to use in remote locations.

But Cubo faces a challenge. Most of the target locations for its technology do not have access to an adequate water distribution infrastructure.

Innovate 4 Water

In June 2017, Cubo came to Innovate 4 Water looking for a solution to their problem.

Innovate 4 Water 2017 was an international matchmaking event organized by WIPO GREEN, Waterpreneurs and Watervent. It brought together technology providers and entrepreneurs, investors, public sector organizations, incubators, and other stakeholders in the water sector.

Among them was Susteq, a Dutch company that has developed a water payment and dispensation terminal.

Susteq's solution sounded like a way to help Cubo deliver water to the final user by utilizing the "smart water" approach – leveraging the power of technology to integrate a payment and collection system, thus creating an even more effective business model.

From connection to collaboration

At the event, Cubo's Chief Technology Officer, Rui Brás Gomes, made contact with Susteq. After that first meeting, Rui decided to take the Cubo team to the Netherlands to visit Susteq headquarters. At the end of the trip, they established a partnership that would allow Cubo to use Susteq's terminals in its treatment and distribution systems.

Implementing the solution in Kenya and Nigeria

The first joint venture was in Murang'a, Kenya, where Cubo deployed its technology to supply safe drinking water to approximately 1, 000 people.

A Susteq terminal was installed at a local church to ensure community members could easily access, collect, and pay an affordable price for clean water.

Payments are made by way of a pre-charged near-field communication (NFC) tag so no cash passes hands at the collection point.

News of the existence and functionality of the new water source has been spreading quickly since then.



Photo: CUBO

Training the local population to use the micropayment system



Local residents lining up to use a Susteq terminal

Cubo is now integrating this new model – which uses Susteq’s equipment – into the Nigerian market.

Cubo’s network has expanded to include DeltaLift Resources Nigeria Limited. DeltaLift is a Nigerian company operating in the West Africa sub region that provides engineering

and project services to businesses, primarily in the energy sector.

Cubo will leverage its partnership with DeltaLift to deploy the self-sustaining smart water utility model throughout Nigeria, improving access to safe drinking water. Prices are kept down by combining the low treatment and operation cost of Cubo’s equipment with the simplicity and security of the micropayment system developed by Susteq.

Searching for future collaborators

Cubo is looking to access the Indian market next. They are looking for partners that can manage their equipment, including its operation and maintenance, as well as implement a commercial strategy and invest financially in the water sector.



To find out more about this partnership and the work of Cubo Environmental Technologies, contact:



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