

Safe water access: Stepping up to the power of platforms

Platforms of concertation are key in scaling-up access to safe water through strengthening the sub-sector of household water treatment, storage and proximity provision. The 300in6 view.

As a communications platform itself for scaling-up access to safe water, 300in6 supports the development of scaling-up platforms in a national context.

Such a platform is a business-like form of cooperation which leads to the scaled-up delivery, adoption and maintenance of the services of participating parties, in household water treatment and proximity provision services, in the framework of national safe water goals.

There are distinct, complementary tasks for public and private bodies. For the public sector they include regulation and smart granting. Further, with key inputs from civil society bodies attuned to the voice of the poor and from social philanthropists, it is in the public domain that the work of market creation via health-hygiene education and attractive social marketing must be conducted.

The actual delivery of solutions along a sustainable supply chain requires the involvement of the private sector, including stimulus measures. This will serve to ensure, amongst others, a consumer orientation and the dynamic of user choice.

All these parties are from the enterprising spaces of public, private and civil society sectors, and are self-selecting, on the basis of a process of extensive mapping and consultation, facilitated by 300in6.

Depending on the country and concerting parties, a platform can thus, directly or indirectly, lead to the strengthening of the national sub-sector of household treatment and proximity provision which is a strategic goal for effective scaling-up. The roles of 300in6 can include the facilitation, communication and mediation of steps towards a platform and its coordination.

1. The next step in the business of scaling-up the availability of safe water in homes at the Base of the Pyramid is to enable the assembly (coming together) of stakeholders in concerted action. The reason is clear. The availability of safe water is a vital intervention in the health of the individual, household and society. According to the authoritative GLAAS, the social return on investment in water and sanitation can rise to a remarkable 30:1.

A recent study by 300in6 pointed to at least 43 professions active in the delivery and use of household water treatment and proximity provision at the BoP (Annex 2). This is a (sub-)sector in its own right, and not a field where go-it-alone action has real impact. The gains of cooperation are evident.

It is in the light of ultimate sector-building that the development of platforms should be seen.

Whether a particular platform should, at the outset, aim to have national and over-arching scope, or simply be a region-based group of enterprising actors with a cluster of technological approaches, is determined by pragmatic decisions. Each element of its work should contribute to sector-building.

2. 300in6: Point-of-Use quality for the pipeless

Our actual focus is on (treatment and storage) non-piped interventions, whilst piped water is the preferred, yet often distant, solution for many, especially in rural and peri-urban areas. Similarly, we see the need to liaise with thrusts in self-supply and water quantity, and emphasise water source improvement, still patchy in places. The issue now is to energise safe water access at PoU, whilst seeing short-term solutions (30 years?) as a transition towards piped, and safely-piped, goals.

3. Proposed scaling-up strategy: remove obstacles, empower supply, let demand speak

The approach of 300in6 towards scaling-up is built on two pillars:

- a) the removal of technical, regulatory and institutional obstacles which hinder the full expression of both the potential supply chain, and of demand; and
- b) the empowerment of the entire supply chain, and potential demand, to meet on an unprecedented scale. This requires a wide range of skills and insights.

In addition to the removal of obstacles, 300in6 sees four major areas of measures of empowerment:

3A. Empowerment #1: Creating awareness: Joint social marketing campaigns to inform people about the benefits of low-cost safe water options.

Many low-income people are unaware of the importance of safe practices in water, sanitation and hygiene. This is a case for positive social marketing campaigns. Awareness creation, consumer education and behaviour change are primarily public health tasks. They need not focus only on moral imperatives, but also messages of social and financial gains. They can be financed by public and private funds, but are not the task of individual private suppliers. Maximum impact will result from large-scale promotion of different solutions, not tied to any specific technology or product.

3B. Empowerment #2: Private sector delivery: Business development and strengthening the supply chain to improve the quality and the quantity of supply.

Market-based approaches provide the most effective delivery of solutions. It is key to support local entrepreneurs to produce, assemble and distribute solution, and thus a competitive supply chain of affordable products and (maintenance) services – again, as part of sector-building.

In the same sense, the marketing of safe water systems is a business with, admittedly, the extra dimension of social marketing costs. Here, it would be wise to stimulate and support social enterprises to impel product development and market entry. Measuring their success should focus less on their positive cashflow and primarily on the social returns on investment. Many promising models have emerged (Annex 2); they need strengthening with business development programmes. The alternative – gifting, or deep-subsidising, solutions – is neither sustainable nor scalable.

3C. Empowerment #3: Smart finance for supply chain, and converting demand to purchases

The world of social enterprise is rich in innovative finance models, both for the supply chain and to make market prices affordable. Many examples exist in other sectors, such as off-grid energy access, and are applicable in our sub-sector. Financial instruments for optimising the supply chain include:

- Establishment of ‘innovation funds’ and/or ‘growth funds’
- Market-based funding, rather than continuation of market-distorting gifts
- New mechanisms, including innovative finance institutions, bonds and CDM/CER
- Smart blending of financial measures, including grants for capacity building of specific sector players and social marketing, alongside equity for on-lending

In terms of affordable and acceptable prices for water, given that low-income customers often pay more for even unsafe water than the rich, the task is not to discuss ‘willingness to pay’. It is to apply instruments that reduce payment burdens, such as micro-finance, smart grants, redemption vouchers with dealers and other means of lowering instalment levels.

3D. Empowerment #4: Quality assurance

Consumers, funders, investors, suppliers, regulators and donors all need the assurance that the options they support, the choices they make and the impact to which they aspire are trustworthy, and properly validated. Here, the health of the sector is at stake, and right solutions need to be protected and promoted in regulations that are both enforceable but enforced.

4. The tasks on a platform

The above measures can be implemented in an orchestrated way at a scaled level, overarching diverse approaches and options on a national, sub-national or regional level. The participants in a platform in fact form this orchestra. Depending on local circumstances, their coordination could be facilitated by an existing civil society body, a programme management office or a (social) franchising company with hybrid goals and ownership.

Among the tasks that could typically be expected on a full raft of a full-service platform, the following services could be delivered, either by an appointed unit, or by participating organisations:

- Establishing, and later updating, a 'Who is Who' and 'Who-What-Where-When' by means of a rapid mapping appraisal and creating a roundtable of all participating organisations;
- Designing a joint social (generic) marketing campaign to create awareness and induce behavioural change on the dangers of unsafe water, the benefits of safe WASH and adoption of available low-cost solutions;
- Examine existing regulations with appropriate level of government and propose new measures to firm up the enabling environment.
- Seek policy coordination with NGO's, donor organizations and private enterprises;
- Establish a monitoring and control system and practices
- Facilitate competition, encouraging wholesalers and vendors to offer multiple WASH products and services, including training programmes for purchase and sales staff;
- Incentivise finance institutions to offer innovative credit and services to suppliers and users;
- Invite social investors to support both social and product-centric marketing activities with hybrid finances in the form of grants, equity and investment capital.

5. How to proceed – next steps proposed

These processes of 'orchestration' will involve like-minded organisations in a national, sub-national or regional area. They will streamline, bundle and focus them towards a common scaling-up objective. Some, such as social marketing, should be concerted, visibly boosting the activities of all stakeholders to a higher level and expanding them into new dimensions. In this, 300in6 will act as facilitator and not implementer; its goal to assist the players to assemble, in order to scale-up.

To initiate the process, the following practical steps can be envisaged:

5A. Country selection:

Select countries (regions) on the following criteria:

- A) interest (or no objection) from both key donors of 300in6
- B) access to safe water is a major problem
- C) many potential partners of 300in6 involved
- D) good potential to get ownership for a scaling-up programme

For Aqua for All and SDC, the potential countries now are principally – but not exclusively -- Mozambique, Malawi, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya, Haiti and Cambodia.

5B. Mapping of activities and partners:

Crucially, the first step should be to fully understand the current state of affairs, through a rapid appraisal and mapping exercise of existing activities, using consultants who know the country well and are not biased towards any given technology, service or player. The mapping of 'Who is Who' and 'Who-What-When-Where' will also describe what is missing, what is the scope and potential of government policy, the extent of private sector involvement and the prospective future players. This would imply visits to all stakeholders, explaining the intentions of 300in6 in platform building.

5C. Roundtable and scaling-up plan:

After this mapping, a roundtable will be held of all available stakeholders and potential partners. A consensus will be sought on a rough concept of a long-term scaling-up road map and a business plan which could usefully address the following:

- A) **Bottlenecks**: their nature, existing attempts to solve them, and future priorities.
- B) **Complementary actions**: needs of social marketing, regulation and policy environment.
- C) **Private sector**: explore the interest of private sector players to participate in, for example, starting a dealership for water filters, production plants for CWP filters, or local chlorine production.
- D) **Social investors**: explore interest of social investors and micro-finance bodies in participating
- E) **Budget**: outline short- and long-term budgets and make initial funding approaches

5D. Implementation and coordination:

Depending on prevailing circumstances and institutional arrangements, a coordination body could be created to oversee progress. This could also decide on all future action allowing 300in6 to withdraw as a facilitator and focus on a role as communicator.

300in6, Berne/The Hague, December 2011

About 300in6

300in6 is a business-like organisation, supported by funds originating from the Governments of the Netherlands and Switzerland, and civil society and water sector groups. It currently operates under the legal aegis of the Dutch NGO funder broker Aqua for All. The core (management) group self-monitors its optimal legal form, reviewing this at six-monthly intervals. An 'outer circle' of advisers is coalescing, with specialists from the sectors and professions of water/WASH, finance, social enterprise, design, scaling-up, behaviour change and communication.

The "300 in 6" is a reference to our belief that, in genuine scaling-up scenarios, the sector of household water treatment, storage and proximity provision can provide access to safe water for at least 300 million more people in the six years up to end-2015.

Several stakeholders in 300in6 worked on the study led by Hystra, a French consultancy, on 'Access to Safe Water for the Base of the Pyramid'. The work of 300in6 is to some extent aligned to the findings of that study, which it helped to shape. The full reports are available at Hystra.com. The [executive summary](#) is also at 300in6.org.

ANNEX 1

These examples illustrate what works, and the type of undertaking that could contribute and derive much benefit by being in a scaling-up platform – if their cooperation is orchestrated, concerted.

Sarvajal, franchise India

Anand Shah is a franchisor in India and provides the installation of water kiosks with reverse osmosis treatment systems. He is a social entrepreneur, with social objectives, providing access to water to the poor for an affordable price. Funding is 100 % social venture capital from a philanthropy entity. The franchisee sells water to people in a village for 0.6 US cents per litre. More than 200 franchisees serve up to 80,000 people. It is planned to expand by 10 to 12 new kiosks per month in the coming years. One lesson: the franchising model needs careful construction in the safe water field.

Springhealth water kiosks, India

Paul Polak, a social entrepreneur, is creating a network of water kiosks in Orissa with existing village shop owners. Each will get a 3000 litre water tank, regularly chlorinated by Springhealth. Water will be sold in 10-liter jerry cans at 2 Rupees each. Trials indicate that shop owners also increase sales of other goods. It is planned to initially roll out 4 kiosks per month, rising ultimately to 50.

Kenya Water Trust Fund

In this project-under-construction in Kenya, utilities will be invited to tender on a call for proposals to provide water kiosks, yard taps and public toilets for, in total, 800,000 people. A Trust Fund, funded by Gates Foundation, KFW and GIZ for in excess of USD 10 million provides the investments, monitoring and evaluation, quality control and legislation/regulation. Any utility, *private* as well as public/national, can subscribe. Proposals will be contracted and have bonus/penalty fees.

Navaisha water kiosks, Kenya

The local utility (NaivaWASS) contracts Manje, a private company, to supply water in peri-urban areas, buying in from private borehole operators. It employs several dozen vendors in water kiosks, with specialised fluoride filters. NaivaWASS provides maintenance and repair, capacity building, monitoring and quality control. *See articles in [Upscale - The Safe Water Review #1](#), on 300in6.org.*

Ideas at Work, Cambodia

This NGO-cum-social enterprise promotes several household water treatment and safe storage options, plus water filters, rope pumps and PUR tablets. They now envisage marketing mobile water treatment units to enable entrepreneurs to start their own kiosk business, adding free promotion activities and after-sales services to add more value.

Hydrologic water filters Cambodia

After promoting ceramic water purifiers filters for many years, IDE has now created a profit-seeking social enterprise, Hydrologic. It has sold almost 200,000 water filters (Rabbit) for USD 10.

Shipo – Tanzania

Almost a platform in its own right, working in the Southern Highlands with NGO and CBO self-help projects, SHIPO has set up the SMART Centre to demonstrate and train entrepreneurs in some 15 low cost technologies for water harvesting, water filters and latrines. It stimulates demand by hygiene education, and running revolving funds with credit/savings coops, selling to NGOs and local government. Some 50% of its catalogue, such as rope pumps, sells commercially to households.

ANNEX 2

How many types of people does it take to make a glass of water safe to drink, in a scenario of household water treatment, storage and proximity provision?

A consumer · Banker · Bicycle and vehicle maintenance staff · Broadcaster · Business counsellor · Celebrity · Curriculum developer (primary) · Curriculum developer (technical education) · Delivery and transport worker · Distribution planner · Equipment vendor · Evaluator and monitor · Financial adviser · Health worker · Household manager · Hygiene agent · Industrial designer · Interpreter of micro-to-macro policy · Laboratory technician · Law enforcer · Legislator · Maintenance agent · Marketeer · Media producer · Minister (Finance) · Paradigm designer · Procurement specialist · Production engineer · Retailer · Role model · Scaling-up specialist · Scientist · Sector builder · Social investor · Social media specialist · International development specialist · Supply chain manager · Survey specialist · Teacher · Teacher trainer · Trader · Trainer of technical agents · Water vendor · (List deliberately incomplete)

- Excerpt from the 300in6 corporate brochure