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WOMEN'S INITIATIVE AWARDS



2017 FINALIST FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

KATHY KU

Uganda

Spouts of Water

WWW.SPOUTS.ORG

Manufactures and distributes affordable, locally produced ceramic water filters

In 2010, while volunteering at a health clinic in Uganda, Kathy Ku found there was a shocking lack of clean, safe water and was inspired to act. She soon realised that more than 10 million Ugandans – nearly a third of the population – lack access to clean water sources, while another 20 million rely on boiled water as the primary means of accessing safe water. As a result, water-borne illnesses remain the number one cause of death for children under the age of five (Source: UNICEF). The 25-year-old Harvard graduate started SPOUTS of Water in June 2014 alongside John Kye, with the goal of providing an affordable and effective solution to this major issue.



Their solution was a low cost, ceramic water filter made from locally sourced materials. Since Ugandan drinking water is traditionally stored in clay pots, the filters were culturally and socially accepted by the local population.

SPOUTS' Purifaaya, the only water filter manufactured in Uganda, is a source of safe water for families, and costs \$20 and lasts two years. The filter is made from a mixture of ground clay and sawdust, the firing process burns the sawdust away, creating a porous network that allows water through but not bacteria. Alongside the devastating health ramifications, the economic and social consequences of a lack of safe drinking water are widespread. About US\$170 million in opportunity cost is lost annually due

“ In 10 years, we want the filter to be in every kitchen providing clean drinking water for all households across Uganda ”

to the diarrheal diseases, with much time spent fetching and boiling water. The burden of such tasks mainly falls to women and children; estimates suggest they spend 140 million hours every day collecting water and account for 76% of the water collection for households .

The Purifaaya is also having a positive impact on the environment. Based on WHO statistics, Kathy has calculated that in just over one year, 2.7 billion kg of CO₂ is released into the atmosphere by Ugandans boiling water for drinking. By eliminating the need to boil, the Purifaaya reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

SEAL OF APPROVAL

SPOUTS's innovation lies not only in the affordability and effectiveness of the product, but in the entire value-chain. With a lack of Ugandan made products available, the local manufacture of the Purifaaya using locally sourced materials allows the company to sell filters at an affordable price and provides 35 jobs. Although there are many organisations on the ground in Uganda working to alleviate the lack of clean drinking water, traditional aid models often deliver short-term solutions for free, which tend to fail. These free solutions or large scale community-based installations often fall into disrepair as there is no sense of ownership.

The Purifaaya now has the ultimate seal of approval, having been tested and approved by the Uganda Ministry of Water and Environment.

BOOSTING PRODUCTION

To date, SPOUTS has distributed more than 7,000 filters, providing access to clean drinking water to more than 90,000 households and public spaces and 200 sales points now established across Uganda, the company is looking to expand rapidly.

SPOUTS' partners include organisations like Save the Children, educating students and installing filters in school, and microfinance organisations like BRAC, who offer financing options for people who cannot afford the filter's upfront cost.

Currently operating from a remodelled chicken farm, SPOUTS is in the process of

building a larger factory to scale its production from 800 filters a month to 2,000, with space to potentially produce 10,000/month. With this jump in production, the company will continue to disrupt the market and help stop the far-reaching, catastrophic consequences of the inaccessibility to clean water.

“ I think women are doing great in the business arena already, but entrepreneurship will boost them to create positive impact in the world ”