



THE EXECUTIVE'S DAILY GREEN BRIEFING

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## Drinking Problems: Innovative Approaches to the World's Water Crisis

John Davies  
AMR Research Inc.



March 22nd was World Water Day, and for many in the developed world, it passed without much notice. But elsewhere, more than 4,000 children under the age of five die each day from diseases caused by drinking unsafe water. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 1 billion people worldwide lack access to clean drinking water, and an estimated 2.2 million children die each year because of diarrheal diseases, many of which could be prevented with access to a safer water supply.

Access to clean water is at the core of the United Nation's Millennial Development Goals established in 2000. In 2005, the UN called for an international decade of water-related action, with then Secretary General Kofi Annan imploring, "We shall not finally defeat AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, or any of the other infectious diseases that plague the developing world until we have also won the battle for safe drinking water, sanitation, and basic healthcare."

As we know, big problems require big ideas to solve them. AMR Research recently spoke with executives from Procter & Gamble (P&G) and the Blue Planet Run Foundation to get an update on their efforts toward providing new blueprints on how lessons from business can be used to solve world problems.

### Clip and save the world

A few weeks ago in Sunday papers across the nation, P&G provided a booklet of coupons under its brandSAVER program, with an offer to "Save Money, Improve Lives." For each coupon redeemed, P&G will supply a liter of filtered drinking water to a person in the developing world. The company's goal for this program is to donate 50 million liters of water during the months of March and April. We contacted Keith Zook, a Fellow in the company's Global Sustainability organization, to learn more.

### The splash heard round the world

According to Mr. Zook, P&G launched the Children's Safe Drinking Water program in 2003, with a goal to reduce the sickness and death in children resulting from drinking contaminated water.

The most important tool the company has to achieve this goal is based on a discovery by two of its UK-based scientists who, in partnership with the Center for Disease Control, developed the PUR water purification system. Described as a "mini water treatment plant in a packet," it is a revolutionary product in the field of water

purification, and it couldn't be easier to use. A demonstration on P&G's website shows a two-and-a-half-gallon bucket of dirty water transformed into clean drinking water in just 30 minutes. The treatment is so effective, it even removes arsenic from the water, a major problem in India and elsewhere.

One of the major advantages of this kind of technology is that it can be easily and rapidly deployed in the aftermath of disasters such as the tsunami in Southeast Asia, earthquakes in Indonesia and Pakistan, and hurricanes in Haiti and Venezuela.

P&G works with a diverse group of partners to provide families in developing countries with access to clean drinking water. To date, the company has distributed over 90 million sachets that have purified over 900 million liters of water. In developing countries, P&G sells the packets at a cost to cover materials and transport, making no additional profit. It sells the packets to government agencies, emergency relief organizations, and other nonprofits like CARE and the Red Cross.

The company has recently introduced the product in North American markets in a distribution agreement with Reliance Products. The company will market the PUR product to campers as well as for emergency preparedness kits. According to program director Greg Allgood, "The effort will help fund our philanthropic efforts by providing two liters of water in the developing world for every package purchased in the United States."

In summarizing the company's efforts, Mr. Zook noted the company set a goal last September that it would deliver 2 billion liters of clean water by the end of 2012. We asked about the response from shareholders and the company's board of directors, and Mr. Zook told us the main question has been "Why aren't we moving faster?" One recent example of this kind of support is when several retired corporate officers sponsored a fund-raising activity, raising \$660,000 for work in Malawi. The company looks forward to its PUR system becoming "the splash heard round the world."

### **Giving water a run for its money**

We were first introduced to the Blue Planet Run Foundation by the Dow Chemical Company, its major sponsor (see our initial coverage in "The Wisdom of Peers"). Blue Planet Run organized 21 runners that circumnavigated the world in the first truly global relay in support of providing clean drinking water to those who need it.

At the time, we were excited by founder Jin Zidell's goal to give 200 million people access to safe drinking water by 2027, as well as the innovative technology strategy that will enable the foundation to reach that goal by funding a large number of projects around the world. We recently talked with new CEO Lisa Nash about what programs it had planned for 2008 and how the Peer Water Exchange was working.

Ms. Nash described her background in brand marketing for consumer products where her focus was on building customer relationships and increasing brand loyalty. She plans to bring those skills to the foundation's efforts toward becoming "the voice of water." After discussing the fundraising success of last year's relay (which will be run every other year) as well as the publication of the book *Blue Planet Run*, which documents the event and the global water crisis, Ms. Nash described the major fundraising activities for 2008.

The centerpiece will be Blue Planet Run 24, capitalizing on what Ms. Nash assures us is the fastest-growing segment in the running market: the trail series. For these events, a state park with a five mile course is chosen, and each runner loops the course, handing a baton to the next runner. The participants will continue for 24 hours straight.

She describes runners as early adopters and a good channel for pushing the foundation's message out. In addition

to the relay, the event will include educational displays as well as lots of family-oriented activities. The first will occur May 3-4 in Black Mountain, North Carolina (near Asheville), with others planned for Colorado, Minnesota, New England, and the Pacific Northwest.

The Peer Water Exchange, which Mr. Zidell earlier described to us as “the eBay of the safe drinking water field,” has been very successful in its second year of operation. The foundation funded 24 projects that brought safe water to over 4,200 people.

True to the strategy of bringing water and sanitation to rural areas, the efforts were managed by nine partners in seven countries, reflecting the distributed nature of how the PWX was designed to work. New partners such as PROTOS, one of the world's largest water and sanitation non-government organizations (NGOs), and Kairos, which indirectly worked with the foundation in Sierra Leone, will provide greater expertise and resources to the peer network.

### Got water?

P&G, the Dow Chemical Company, and the Blue Planet Run Foundation are all demonstrating leadership in addressing a large global problem. Most importantly, they're doing it with the experience and skills they bring from their commercial backgrounds.

*John Davies is Vice President of Green Research at AMR Research, Inc. Send an email to John at [jdavies@amrresearch.com](mailto:jdavies@amrresearch.com).*

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#### COMMENTS

Leaders who adopted the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 envisioned halving the proportion of people living without access to basic sanitation by the year 2015 – but we are nowhere near on pace to achieve that goal. Experts predict that by 2015, 2.1 billion people will still lack basic sanitation. At the present rate, sub-Saharan Africa will not reach the target until 2076.

If we take up the challenge, the positive impact will reverberate far beyond better access to clean water. Every dollar invested in water and sanitation yields an estimated seven dollars worth of productive activity. And that comes on top of the immeasurable gains in cutting poverty, improving health and raising living standards. This will help all you people on this blog to do something along with the United Nations in your locality.

Check this

<http://www.orkut.com/Community.aspx?cmm=47234928>

Ayesha Lakhani April 10th, 2008

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