

Unilever teams up with Facebook to switch on safe water

Unilever has launched a scheme to provide safe clean drinking water to communities around the world by harnessing the power of social networking.

The Unilever Foundation in partnership with Population Services International (PSI) has set up not-for-profit programme Waterworks to provide water for communities in need.

Unilever will provide water purification devices and sachets at cost to the Waterworks programme and will also cover overhead running costs - including developing and running the J2ME Facebook fundraising app.

Users of the app choose a small daily donation from €0.10 to €1 and a Waterworker to partner with. The workers will be trained by PSI so they understand water purification, sanitation and hygiene issues.

The Waterworkers then go out into their communities to pass on this information and distribute the water purification devices and sachets. Each Waterworker will be given a mobile phone preloaded with the app allowing them to take photos and record stories to connect back to their Facebook partners.

"They will share the stories of how their donations are making an impact on people's lives, inspiring them to continue giving and supporting her work," said Unilever global media innovation director Debbie Weinstein.

"Through regular progress reports, the partners will have a chance to see first-hand how their small donations can add up to a real impact."

Weinstein added that users of the Facebook app will be able to promote the scheme with their friends by viewing Waterworker notifications and further sharing these stories.

Unilever will be monitoring the pilot scheme, taking place in Bhopal, India, to hopefully scale up the scheme as well as set targets. Around 75 Waterworkers will be trained up for the pilot.

Around 800m people drink contaminated water every day and Unilever has made a commitment to provide safe drinking water to 500m people by 2020 through partnership work with other organizations.

Unilever added that it has spent a decade developing water purification technology and can now provide safe water for families for as little as \$0.06 per litre. However, some families still can't afford this and "many more" are unaware that this technology exists or how to use it.

(Source: edie Water)