

PUR[®] – water for developing countries

Chris Smith, Procter & Gamble

In many parts of the world, contaminated drinking water represents a major health hazard. The World Health Organization (WHO) puts estimates of those without access to safe and adequate sources of drinking water at 1.2 billion people. Furthermore, a significant number of illnesses and deaths are reported annually as a result of waterborne diseases, with diarrhoea-related illnesses alone estimated to cause two million deaths per year, the majority of which are young children.

Imagine that you could devise a simple, affordable water treatment system that could help address this global issue. Since 1995, Procter & Gamble (P&G) has been working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the US to develop effective, clean water technologies and it was this collaboration that produced PUR[®] – Purifier of Water, a simple, affordable, in-home system for delivering clean water.

The product was first developed by P&G scientist Phil Souter. Phil had seen first hand the need for clean water during his travels, and his experience working at P&G's technical centre in Newcastle on a laundry product gave him an idea for a solution. Could not the same technology used in almost every laundry product act as a 'dirt magnet' for drinking water? This technology is frequently used in municipal water treatment plants so why not develop a simple, effective and affordable in-home version?

The prototype was refined following tests with thousands of consumers in developing countries. These consumers consistently told us what they wanted:

- visible signals that water was cleaner;
- control of the process in the home;
- affordability.

It was these requirements that PUR[®] – Purifier of Water set out to satisfy. The result? One PUR[®] sachet provides 10 litres of visibly cleaner, safe water – enough for the average family's daily potable needs – for US \$0.035, or about the price of an egg.



The PUR[®] process is simple and uses simple implements that people in developing countries have in their homes. The contents of one small sachet are added to a 10 litre bucketful of water and mixed. The combined flocculation/disinfection technology separates the dirt and other contaminants from the water within five minutes. The water is then filtered through a cloth to separate the floc, which is then disposed of in the latrine. After 30 minutes to allow for disinfection, clear, clean water is ready to drink.

The water cleaning process

The project, however, is not just about developing the product. A holistic approach is required to ensure the product reaches those that really need it. Based on initial market analysis, it became clear that P&G's traditional marketing approach would not work in those parts of the world where this product was most needed.

A lack of infrastructure and very limited communication routes meant that a more innovative marketing approach was needed. As a result, a specific strategy was developed and has been underway in Latin America and Asia for several years. This has included clinical studies in Guatemala by CDC, learning-markets in rural villages and the testing of consumer acceptance at the village level.

Today, PUR[®] is being marketed on a large scale in several countries using an effective social market-based model supported by our partners Population Services International (PSI), a non-profit US-based organisation that harnesses the vitality of the commercial sector to tackle health problems in over 70 countries. This partnership allows PUR[®] to be delivered to low-income consumers in remote, difficult-to-reach locations. Further in-country work is carried out through other partners such as the International Council of Nurses (ICN), Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, USA), teachers, doctors, church leaders and humanitarian organisations such as CARE. They help to educate the local population about the need for safe water, household water storage and how to use the product appropriately. The result is a reduced occurrence of diarrhoeal illness and

– a case study

other waterborne diseases, as well as a boost to local economies.

As well as this social model which provides PUR® for regular day-to-day use, the product is also ideal for emergency use. Millions of people lack access to safe drinking water because of natural disasters or armed conflicts and PUR® has several potential advantages in this context. Its long-term stability means it can be stockpiled in areas of frequent disasters for long periods, it is easy to transport – even in inefficient distribution chains – and its robustness means it can treat even very turbid surface waters. This emergency relief model involves both product distribution, typically through a relief agency, and the provision of simple education materials in multiple languages. To date this emergency relief model has delivered over 200 million litres of safe clean water all over the world.

In total (social markets and emergency relief) PUR® has been used in Haiti, the Philippines, Guatemala, Morocco, Pakistan, India, Liberia, Bangladesh, Chad, Botswana, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Iran, Ethiopia, Iraq, Uganda, Kenya and the tsunami-ravaged region of South East Asia.

The success of this product contains many lessons. Yes, the solution to the problem of safe drinking water was a technical one, but getting the product to the people that most needed it, and encouraging them to use it in order to reduce illness and disease, involved consumer understanding and innovations in marketing, distribution and education. Furthermore, the development of the product, its distribution and long-term viability have been wholly

dependent on partnerships with other organisations that individually deliver vital parts of the holistic strategy. Without these partnerships and innovations in marketing, PUR® would have been unable to deliver over 300 million litres of safe, clean water since its introduction in 2000.

For more information on PUR® visit www.pghsi.com/safewater



Membership grows

In the last year, seven brand manufacturers have joined existing members to support the British Brands Group's work in explaining the contribution of brands to the UK and campaigning for an environment of fair competition. These members vary in size and cover a range of sectors from toiletries and household goods to food and drink.

Sales promotion regulation withdrawn

The European Commission has withdrawn its proposals for its Sales Promotion Regulation due to intractable disagreements between member states. The withdrawal highlights continued difficulties in moving towards a harmonised single market.

Alliance changes its name

The Alliance against Counterfeiting and Piracy has changed its name and is now called The Alliance against IP Theft. The Alliance, of which the British Brands Group is a member, is a unique coalition of trade and enforcement bodies with an interest in preventing IP theft. The new name reflects the growing threat from new forms of IP crime. The website is unchanged (www.aacp.org.uk).