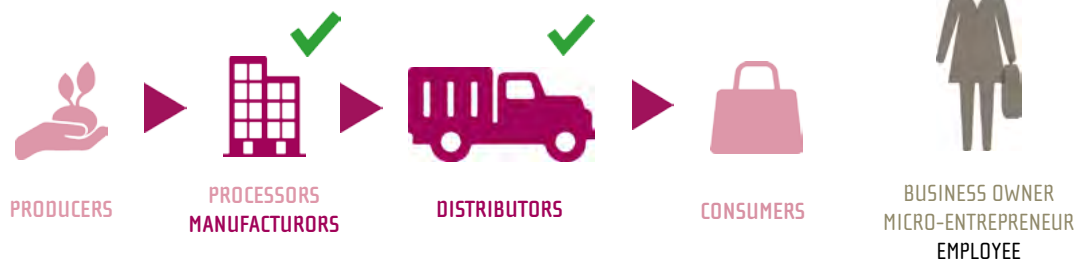


Women as Inclusive Business partners

Basic Water Needs: Women as the backbone of water filter-business



ENGAGEMENT IN THE VALUE CHAIN



- **Company:** Basic Water Needs (BWN)
- **Business focus:** BWN is an enterprise that produces and distributes water filters among BoP consumers and middle class markets in 30+ countries.
- **Started:** in 2004. Factory in India opened in 2004

Results for women


25 women offered a safe and reliable place to work in the production factory; an emerging group of women at the BoP have been trained towards micro-entrepreneurship for social marketing and sales.

Results for business

In production, BWN gains responsible and loyal employees; in distribution working with women at the BoP, strengthens social marketing among potential customers. This contributes to business performance.

'Women as Inclusive Business Partners' is an initiative by [BoP Innovation Center](#) and [ICCO Cooperation](#)





'Women are more reliable and loyal employees ... that adds to your production. If you make sure that you provide good working conditions ... you will surely earn back your investment.'

Maria Besteman
Project Manager Basic
Water Needs

It's simply good business

Engineer Klaas van der Ven, developed a simple technology that ensures that turbid and highly contaminated water becomes safe and attractive to drink. Besides this, he developed a solution that is simple, easy to maintain, widely available (the product and spare parts) and above all, affordable for consumers at the Base of the Pyramid.

In 2004 a company was started to produce and distribute water filters among BoP consumers and middle class markets with a low penetration of water purification solutions. Till the end of 2014 BWN has supplied three product types to more than 2 million people in 30+ countries.

Manufacturing takes place in India, with expansion plans to Ethiopia and Malawi. Even though BWN does not have a specific policy to hire women, for them it is 'simply good business'. Women prove to be very reliable and loyal relative to men and make up 50% of the employees (25 permanent, 25 seasonal workers). They work on the assembly line and in leadership positions such as supply chain manager. For BWN it is logical to offer good working conditions to increase employee loyalty. Examples of benefits offered include a study grant fund for employee-children, a staff-nutrition program and training faculties for certain staff.

Since women in India often need permission from other family members to work in a factory, BWN enables family members to join a job interview, to experience that BWN is a safe and reliable place to work. For the new factories, staff can be recruited through commercial agents with links to women's self-help groups.

Distribution and women at the BoP as micro-retailers

Distribution of the water filters is done through a network of commercial agents (business persons, consultants), through NGOs, who facilitate commercial sales, and humanitarian aid agencies. Sometimes there is joint marketing, under non-competitive conditions, e.g. topping up business loans for female micro-entrepreneurs in Indonesia to buy a water-filter as a labor saving device.

To ensure that the water filters actually reach the poorest consumers, in 2013 BWN started a department for 'projects' to establish partnerships with NGOs. NGOs are trusted by local communities; which is important for market entry, awareness raising and social marketing. NGOs can also offer support in selecting and supporting local entrepreneurs. Currently there are projects in India, Malawi and Tanzania. In collaboration with Plan India, BWN started the project 'a Healthy Future for Delhi's Dwellers', which works both on supply and demand. BWN trains women living in Delhi-slums to become micro-retailers, who sell the water filters. Because it is the responsibility of women in these communities to provide water at household level, women sales-persons are well positioned for social marketing. Plan India works on awareness around safe drinking water. In some situations (for example in Tanzania) men are involved as well as they often control household expenses.

Through these projects and the interaction with sales person and end-consumers, new market insights are also acquired. For example, BWN learned that BoP consumers would benefit from a new product design and based on this, new designs are now being developed.

For more information about Basic Water Needs visit the [website](#).
