



# Saving water and donating to a good cause as a business case: Made Blue shows how this can be done

*Earn money by saving water and donating to charities simultaneously. Made Blue has been successful with this business case for companies for ten years. The foundation helps hotels, catering- and cleaning companies, among others, to save water. In return, they ask for a small donation. A quarter of a million people in Africa and Asia have gained access to 17 billion liters of clean drinking water thanks to this method.*

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An enterprising foundation, that's what [Made Blue](#) calls itself. Founders Machiel van Dooren, Frank van der Tang and Robin Pot were each already experienced in sustainable entrepreneurship when they joined forces in 2014. With Made Blue they want to combine entrepreneurship and doing good. "What sets us apart from other charities is that all our donors are companies. That's what we focus on. We don't depend on or work with government subsidies," says Van Dooren. "We all have a business background. We want to use our knowledge to make the world a little better. Using entrepreneurship can make a big difference in the world."

## Clean water is the foundation

The choice for water was quickly made. More than [771 million](#) people do not have access to clean drinking water worldwide. These people - mostly women and children - walk an average of 6 kilometers per day to fetch water. Time that they cannot spend in school, at work or on family. At the same time, we still [waste a lot of water here in the Netherlands](#) . "Clean drinking water is the foundation for a

healthy and productive existence. It prevents so much illness and wasted time. People can only really start building their lives when they have access to clean water and sanitary facilities," says Van der Tang.

## **Saved water at home flows from a tap on the other side of the world**

Made Blue's sustainable mission is twofold: reducing water use in the Netherlands and supporting charities in Africa and Asia. The foundation has developed an ideal business case for this. "We ensure that the water that companies use, save or sell here, flows out of the tap elsewhere in the world," the pair say. Not literally of course, but indirectly. In fact, Made Blue encourages companies here to save water. They transfer a small part of the money they save as a donation to the foundation.

### **33 cents per thousand liters**

The foundation distinguishes three types of donors. The first category includes companies that can reduce their costs by saving water. These are mainly cleaning companies such as CWS and hotel chains such as Accor, InterContinental and Marriott. Made Blue asks for a donation of 33 cents per thousand liters of water saved (one cubic meter). For that amount, the foundation can provide one cubic meter of clean drinking water in poorer countries. Companies quickly earn 1 euro per cubic meter saved, hotels where water is heated for showering easily save 15 euros per cubic meter. The majority of those savings therefore remain in the pockets of the companies. This means that they continue to donate on a structural basis.

### **A good story and business case**

Made Blue helps hotels encourage their guests to save water, for example by taking shorter showers or using the smart toilet button. "This way hotels can save 100 liters of water per overnight stay. The guest can give away those 100 liters to one of our water projects via a QR code. This costs hotels 5 cents, but they save at least 10 to 15 cents. Hotels all over Europe have shown interest, because it is a good story and a solid business case at the same time," says Van der Tang.



## **Donation per cup of coffee**

The second category consists of other companies that use a lot of water, for example in coffee- and vending machines, such as Maas. They can't reduce the amount of water needed to serve coffee, so they donate a small amount of 0.00005 euros per cup of coffee. This adds up to hundreds of millions of liters of coffee per year throughout the country. "With every cup of coffee, someone else drinks a glass of water with you," says Van Dooren. This program is called 'A liter for a liter'. Various companies and organizations compensate their water consumption this way with a donation for clean drinking water in developing countries.

## **A thousand times as much water elsewhere**

The third category includes the catering industry. Made Blue asks restaurateurs to stop serving bottled spring water and encourages them to tap their own, local water with a machine. This is often served in a 700-milliliter bottle. For every bottle served, they donate 23 cents to Made Blue. In fact, they donate a thousand times as much clean drinking water elsewhere in the world. In total, the foundation has almost 600 donors. Made Blue calls them ambassadors, because thanks to their word-of-mouth advertising, more and more other companies are joining. All companies can see on the website what impact they have made and how many people receive clean drinking water thanks to them.

## **Paying for water infrastructure**

With these donations, Made Blue pays for the infrastructure for clean drinking water in countries where it is not immediately available. For example, deep drilling for water at a depth of 300 or 400 meters, wells, taps, laying pipelines and building water kiosks and toilet buildings. The foundation finances projects in various African countries such as Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia and in Asian countries such as India, Nepal, Vietnam and Bangladesh. The construction of that infrastructure has given 250,000 people access to a total of 17 billion liters of clean water over the past ten years. The aim is to have made 70 billion liters of drinking water available in five years.



## Fill piggy bank

The foundation works locally with NGOs such as Simavi, World Vision or Amref. "We help them scale up with our knowledge and resources and then add our entrepreneurial signature," says Van Dooren. What does that mean? In all projects, users pay for their water. This fills a piggy bank, with which projects can independently finance maintenance and possible expansion. Just like water boards do in the Netherlands. "Water is a human right, but that does not mean it is free," Van Dooren explains.

## Snowball effect

This way, small, local drinking water companies or networks are created that last at least ten to twenty years and during that time earn enough for new investments. A good example of this are the projects in [Bangladesh](#). Van der Tang: "All kinds of mini water companies are set up there with that piggy bank, which make a small profit. They use that profit to finance a new water network. This gives you a snowball effect that can expand itself. That is where we want to go, but the poorest are not yet able to do this and neither are local governments. There is still a world of difference to be made."

## Water schools for local residents

In a similar project in [Ethiopia](#), Made Blue provided ten schools with drinking water and sanitary facilities. Toilet units and water kiosks for local residents were also built at each school, so that ultimately not just the students, but more than 20,000 people from the neighborhood could benefit from clean water. The district contributes to these facilities and purchases products from the kiosk. "We are building a mini-company so that the school can continue to operate the kiosks and not be forced to stop maintenance after three months. This allows us to reach a very large group of people with a relatively simple water supply system. That is the way we look at all our projects," says Van der Tang.

Translated from the [original source at Change.inc](#)

