



## THREE INSIGHTS

# HOW CAN WE ACCELERATE ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE?

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We would like to thank the following lead discussants and members of the Business Fights Poverty community for their participation:

**Jenifer Colpas**, Co-Founder & Executive Director, **Tierra Grata Embajadora**; **Monika Frech**, Managing Director, **Yunus Social Business**; **Hamzah Sarwar**, Global Impact and Partnerships Director, **Reckitt**; **Rowan Spazzoli**, Programme Manager, **Yunus Social Business**

Hosted with **Reckitt**

**Access to safe water enables economic prosperity, health and development, and environmental sustainability. The effects of COVID-19 and the on-going impacts of climate change are placing increased strain on already stretched water systems, making the chances of achieving SDG6 extremely challenging.**

In addition to calling for new blended forms of international finance, the panel discussed how social businesses that are community-led and owned can also provide a path for innovation—and, when combined with expertise and concerted funding from larger corporations, how they can provide effective solutions.

### **INSIGHT 1: MORE AND INNOVATIVE FINANCE IS THE KEY TO ENSURING ACCESS TO WATER AND SANITATION FOR ALL (SDG 6)**

Sustainable Development Goal number 6 (SDG 6) aims to sustainably provide clean water access and management for all people by 2030. However, 2.1 billion people worldwide are still unable to consistently access safe and clean water, and it is estimated that overall spending must increase from the current annual figure of \$14 billion to \$114 billion in order to achieve SDG6 by 2030.

The panel discussed that part of the solution to bridging this gap can be found in new finance models and utilising what already exists more effectively. Hamzah Sarwar urged

people to consider: “is there a way to apply the capital in a more appropriate way that’s channelled right, into the right areas, and with the right investment models where blended financing models can come from public and private sectors to achieve the goals?”

Given the cross-societal impact of water stress—affecting industry, health, education, and food systems—Hamzah also emphasised that “it’s really about moving the conversation away from the cost and what’s required to fill the gap, but moving it more to the conversation of the benefits that it offers to society economically and socially”.

**We need to have meaningful relationships that go beyond the numbers. We need transformative change to deliver dignity to those left behind.**

**Jenifer Colpas, Co-Founder & Executive Director, Tierra Grata Embajadora**

***It's not just about getting something from the top down, from the corporations to the social entrepreneurs. That connection will also give something back to the corporations.***

**Monika Frech, Managing Director,  
Yunus Social Business**

## INSIGHT 2: INVEST IN AND PARTNER WITH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

Reckitt and the Yunus Foundation have recently partnered together on the 'Fight for Access Accelerator'. The initiative recognises social entrepreneurs that specialise in water and sanitation and are on the frontlines, close to the problem and in a unique position to develop local solutions that actually work. This might include entrepreneurs who have developed innovative products and services or are enabling behaviour change, particularly with and for vulnerable communities. Rowan explained how, despite significant water challenges in South Africa, the private sector had not traditionally played a significant role. For this reason, the accelerator is bringing together entrepreneurs that they hope will tackle the multifaceted challenges—from menstrual hygiene to finding low-cost models for urban water provision.

Rowan explained that finding the right entrepreneurs was key to success. "Instead of just sourcing our entrepreneurs through regular channels, such as posting on social media and the like, we've reached out through community radio stations and across rural and township areas in Africa. And we've really tried to get a very broad

group of entrepreneurs, not just people that are piloting helicopter approaches".

Partnering with a large corporation like Reckitt will help the entrepreneurs with both financial and non-financial support, including being paired with mentors and experts. They will also be connected with other external partners to scale their solutions. The panel felt that this kind of reciprocal relationship marks a way forward to achieve SDG6 that goes beyond simply securing funds.

## INSIGHT 3: COLLABORATE FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE AND TAKE THE LEAD FROM GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS

The changes needed to achieve SDG6 cannot be fleeting or temporary. Hamzah Sarwar noted that to ensure lasting systemic change, "we need to take both a top-down and a bottom-up approach where we're really fostering grassroots innovations that have the ability to scale but often need a guiding hand."

Tierra Grata is another example of a social business supported by the accelerator programme, in Colombia. They provide safe sanitation for rural populations through ecological toilets that do not use water and generate compost. As Jenifer said: "Companies can leverage the impact we are having. Reckitt has helped us deliver 120 toilets reaching 4000 people in rural communities. They have helped unlock doors and reach places we cannot reach alone".

Additionally, there is a need for multilevel and multisectoral partnerships that can make change at a systemic level, and that often means involving local governments and municipalities in water, sanitation, and hygiene collaborations. The panel agreed that in all collaborations, the different actors need to play to their strengths, not duplicate efforts.

### RESOURCES SHARED:

- **ARTICLE:** [One Drop, Everything About the Sustainable Development Goal 6: Clean Water](#)
- **ARTICLE:** [Reckitt, Time to Rethink How We Get More People Safe Water](#)
- **REPORT:** [CDP, SDG6: How corporate action is driving a water-secure future](#)
- **REPORT:** [The World Bank, The Costs of Meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Targets on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene](#)
- **WEBSITE:** [Tierra Grata](#)
- **WEBSITE:** [The Fight for Access Accelerator](#)