

## **Akvo**

### **Background Information for Journalists and Bloggers October 2009**

#### **1. Overview**

Akvo ([www.akvo.org](http://www.akvo.org)) is a not-for-profit foundation. We create and share internet and mobile phone tools that for the first time make it easy for everyone to reach out and fund thousands of new water and sanitation projects. This is really important, because today 2.6 billion people lack sanitation facilities and 1.1 billion still can't access safe drinking water. Fix this, and people climb out of poverty fast. You get healthy people, who don't have to spend hours fetching water and can making a better living.

The system is designed to appeal to a new generation, who want to see online where their money is being spent. In Akvo, money flows quickly because donors choose what to fund and follow progress online. Knowledge is shared and people can use these storylines to build exciting new campaigns and networks. We've also built some neat widgets that make it easy to embed projects in other websites. And we're open source, so other people can build on our work too, in a way that benefits everyone involved.

We started up in late 2006 and the [akvo.org](http://akvo.org) system went live in August 2008. It's used today by more than 100 partners and by mid October 2009 we had projects in our system that will provide a total of almost 1 million people with clean water or proper sanitation.

We're incorporated as a not-for-profit foundation and are committed to the global open source movement – our tools are available under a Creative Commons license, so they can be used and modified, with improvements fed back to everyone. We're headquartered in The Hague and have eleven main staff located in the Netherlands, UK, Sweden and California.

#### **2. Partners**

Akvo has signed partnerships with over a hundred organisations across the globe to improve knowledge sharing on low cost water and sanitation solutions, to assist selected field partners in fundraising for projects through an online marketplace, and to simplify the reporting back to donors. This year, around €1 million of funds will flow to projects through Akvo.

In 2013 that flow is expected to reach nearly €60 million, enabling approximately 6000 small projects that will provide 3 million people with sustainable access to water and sanitation (based on €20 / person helped).

See the full, current list of Akvo project partners online:  
<http://www.akvo.org/rsr/organisations/>

Our other strategic partners are listed here:

[http://www.akvo.org/web/ngo\\_partners](http://www.akvo.org/web/ngo_partners)

## **Akvo and Live Earth**

Taking place in April 2010, the Dow Live Earth Run for Water is easily the largest worldwide initiative ever held to address the global water crisis. It will consist of a series of 6km runs taking place over the course of 24 hours in countries around the world. That's the same distance those who lack water must walk on average, to fetch it.

Akvo is providing the online tools that allow people donating to Live Earth to assign their money to specific small water projects in the developing world and then follow progress online. Live Earth campaigners can also select a project to raise funds for, and create 'widgets' to insert on their own website that feature donation buttons, links to the project details and latest updates from the local project team. Akvo is also supporting Live Earth as it develops local concerts and race events in countries where Akvo has strong networks - for example, we're helping in cities such as Amsterdam, Stockholm and London, where we know lots of people.

## **3. Why Akvo Exists**

About 1 billion people have no safe drinking water and 2.6 billion people lack basic sanitation around the world.

Akvo addresses the following problems:

**Information exchange** – Information about low cost sustainable water and sanitation solutions is available, but spread over a large number of sources, and essentially disorganised.

**Funding** – The water and sanitation community struggles to attract additional flows of money and connect funds directly to where the demand is.

**Reporting** –The sector is stuck in a 'thick Word report' process, and struggles to share and visualise results in an appealing way to funders and the general public.

## **4. How Akvo Works**

Akvo makes it much easier to do four things:

1. Find projects to fund

Akvo makes it clear where your money goes. When people or institutions fund Akvo projects, they're changing the lives of real people in real places. Funders choose the projects they want and watch

progress unfold as the community teams share updates via SMS, photos and movie clips.

## 2. Find donors to fund your project

Akvo cuts bureaucracy and paperwork for NGOs around the world who today find that process burdensome. They can post projects in a simple manner without being forced through complex steps. All partners are from trusted networks. We make it easier and quicker for them to find the right kind of funds.

Professional development organisations assist in carefully selecting the field partners that are allowed to post projects online. Every project in Akvo has a field partner (project executor) and a support partner (responsible for monitoring) to make sure we meet the highest quality requirements. The online payment system that Akvo uses is set-up in close cooperation with our strategic partner, the Rabobank.

## 3. Report on project progress

Akvo Really Simple Reporting (RSR) makes it easy for local communities and field teams to share short text updates, images and films clips, creating a positive feedback loop. Donors and fundraisers follow project progress online and can showcase storylines automatically in their own websites using Akvo Widgets. NGOs can work with more partners because we offer a common standard for project updates.

## 4. Share water and sanitation knowledge

Akvopedia works just like Wikipedia. It is filled with information on smart and affordable water and sanitation technology in rural or urban settings. Anyone can contribute knowledge and edit Akvopedia. Local field workers get access to new ideas for their projects, and can share knowledge in new ways. For those with good content but who are short of time to share it, Akvopedia offers free editorial services.

## **5. Akvo Financials**

Since its inception in autumn 2006, Akvo has secured more than €1.5 million in grant funds, including a €1 million subsidy from the Schokland Fund, a Dutch development fund that invests in innovative approaches to tackle Millennium Development Goals. Other investors are ASN Bank, Partners for Water, The Union of Waterboards, Nedap, Aqua 4 All and Simavi.

Akvo also has a long-term agreement with Rabobank, which includes the underwriting of a €500,000 loan and a cooperation effort to build open source software tools and payment mechanisms.

Akvo has eleven core staff based in the Netherlands, the UK, Sweden and the United States and an active community of supporters in development and technology. Biographies on the Akvo team can be found at <http://www.akvo.org/web/team>

Akvo's 2008 annual report is available at:  
[http://www.akvo.org/web/annual\\_reports](http://www.akvo.org/web/annual_reports)

A detailed set of Frequently Asked Questions is at  
<http://www.akvo.org/web/faq>

Photography is available at  
<http://www.akvo.org/web/press>

**Or take a look around [www.akvo.org](http://www.akvo.org) to learn more about what we do.**

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