KOOSONGO: CERAMIC FILTERS FOR BURKINA FASO

Koosongo (a Moré word for “good water”) is a social venture founded by The BARKA Foundation with cooperation from Poceram (a Burkinabè ceramics company) to combat the crisis of waterborne disease in Burkina Faso through the production, sale and distribution of ceramic water filters (CWFs).

- Burkina Faso, a small, landlocked country, is a West African nation of 16 million people 90% of whom are subsistence farmers without reliable access to clean water.

- In Burkina Faso, one in five children dies from a preventable waterborne disease before reaching the age of five.

- More than 70% of the national water market spending occurs in the bottom two Base of the Pyramid (BOP) income groups.

A reliable, cost-effective product for safe drinking water that addresses this BOP income group is lacking on the market. Koosongo addresses this problem by providing a simple, affordable and effective technology that Burkinabè families need to break the devastating cycle of waterborne disease. As a pioneering venture, it is poised to be the first mover in a market with 10.5 million potential customers in Burkina alone.
CWFs will be produced in-country using primarily materials that Burkina has in ample supply - red clay and sawdust. For the urban market, filters will be sold and distributed through a network of selected pre-existing retail stores. In peri-urban and rural regions, a team of trained entrepreneurs comprised mainly of women (Koosongo Filter Ambassadors) will travel from village to village to educate on hygiene and the importance of clean drinking water while providing filter demonstrations and selling filters at a subsidized price. Sales to NGOs will allow Koosongo’s CWFs to reach the poorest of the poor in more remote areas.

Social Return on Investment (SROI): 14:1
Within 7 years every $1 spent on Koosongo will yield a $14 return on its investment in the social impact it achieves:

- ↓ waterborne disease
- ↑ economic productivity
- ↑ school attendance
- ↑ quality jobs for Burkinabè

Next-Phase: 12-month Market Test
BARKA is currently seeking funds for startup capital to sufficiently train Poceram artists, establish quality control procedures and test both the urban and rural markets. Koosongo will establish a network of retailers in Ouagadougou, Burkina’s capitol, and train women to become Koosongo Filter Ambassadors in the village and peri-urban market. Focus groups will be conducted to gather key data to determine optimal pricing, packaging and product differentiation.

Awards
- BARKA Foundation’s business plan was a semi-finalist in the Global Social Venture Competition
- Koosongo co-founder Esu Anahata won 1st Place in the Ariane de Rothschilds Fellowship business plan competition

Board of Advisors
Koosongo has assembled the world’s leading filter experts to advise this project.

- Mark Sobsey, Professor of Environmental Microbiology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill
- Susan Murcott, MIT Professor, Founder and CEO, Pure Home Water (Ghana-based filter business)
- Wole Soboyejo, Founder of Filtron, Nigeria-based filter business; Princeton Professor
- 2iE: Burkina Faso’s internationally renowned water research institute (water research institute will oversee quality control)
- Peter Chartrand, US Director, Potters for Peace
- Curt & Cathy Bradner, Co-Founders, Thirst-Aid (created 9 filter factories in Myanmar)