IN INDIA, MOBILE WATER TRACKING SYSTEM UPDATES LOCAL RESIDENTS

NONPROFIT & SOCIAL CAUSE

The reliability of water supply is a major issue for millions of households in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Although water is meant to be delivered to communities via a piped supply on a rotational schedule, the water often isn't being piped when it should be — leaving families waiting indefinitely for supplies. Hoping to provide a solution, we recently came across NextDrop. The NextDrop system, designed and set up by a team of Stanford and Berkeley graduate students, began operations in Hubli, India last year, having won a grant from the Gates Foundation, according to a report on MobileActive.org. In order to communicate with residents when the water is available, valvemen call the NextDrop interactive voice response system upon opening their neighborhood valves. NextDrop then texts the inhabitants of the area the news that water is being piped 30 – 60 minutes before it arrives, as well as texting the engineers at the utility live data on the water delivery. Residents are then contacted randomly to verify the accuracy of the data supplied by the valvemen. If there is any conflict between the data supplied by the valvemen and the residents, the engineers are alerted. These engineers are also able to step in if the valves are not initially reported open when they should be. According to mobileactive.org, the Hubli pilot initially launched with 180 participating families across five water valve districts in Hubli, and NextDrop now plan to go on and expand to encompass 1000 households covering 25 valve areas over the next year. Crowdsourcing may be one of the simplest ways of solving social problems we know of; relying on the participation of those it benefits. What other social problem could you apply the model to? (Related: Free water-saving tool with toilet paper purchase — Shampoo brand is a reminder to save water — Indian farmers control water pumps by mobile phone.) Spotted by: Judy McRae

20th April 2011

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