



## **For Immediate Release**

### **EnterpriseWorks/VITA Receives Gates Foundation Grant to Develop Low-Cost Domestic Rainwater Harvesting System**

*Washington, DC – June 25, 2008* – EnterpriseWorks today announced a five-year grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The funding will allow EnterpriseWorks/VITA (EWV) to analyze domestic rainwater harvesting systems throughout the world, conduct research to reduce the costs of water storage units, and develop and test a market-based approach for the introduction of domestic rainwater harvesting systems to provide drinkable water to areas in need.

EWV will first embark on a year-long, 20-country study of past usages of rainwater harvesting and current technological innovations. This research period will allow EWV to learn more about the market's needs, and design a product to adequately meet them. During the second phase of the project, EWV will implement a pilot project to produce and market a prototype system in a selected region.

Rainwater harvesting could be a solution for some of the 1.1 billion people who do not have access to water for drinking and cooking. The term refers to the "harvesting" of rain by collecting its runoff from a structure, and storing it in above or below-ground vessels. It provides good quality water in close proximity to a household, and eliminates the need for costly distribution systems to remote areas.

Although the potential of rainwater harvesting has always been apparent, the technology has failed to gain popularity. Less than 1% of the world's population takes full advantage of the technique. EnterpriseWorks plans to design an affordable system appropriate for low-income areas that lack access to drinkable water, and to assess the degree to which a market based approach to domestic rainwater harvesting will facilitate access for those in need.

"Domestic rainwater harvesting may actually be the only alternative for improving water supplies in some areas," said Don Feil, President and CEO of EWV. "Tapping rain could have a positive impact on people who live in areas with even limited rainfall. This funding will help us to develop opportunities to provide access to safe water closer to people's homes."

The grant is being made by the Global Development Program of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Global Development Program works with motivated partners to create opportunities for people to lift themselves out of poverty and hunger.

"We are pleased to fund this pioneering project," said Louis Boorstin, Deputy Director for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Global Development Program at the Gates Foundation. "We see an opportunity to make domestic rainwater harvesting available to underserved populations on an affordable basis, reducing not only the risks of waterborne disease but also the physical and social burden on women and girls from hauling water over long distances."



### **About EnterpriseWorks/VITA**

For over 40 years, EnterpriseWorks/VITA has worked diligently to fulfill its mission to combat poverty by helping small producers and other entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses that create jobs and increase productivity, market opportunities and incomes. EWV achieves this by expanding access to appropriate technologies, technical assistance, knowledge and finance.

### **About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people – especially those with the fewest resources – have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, the foundation is led by CEO Patty Stonesifer and co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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