

Tips for successful innovation

Many innovators embark on a challenging journey to test new ideas and solutions to tackle a pressing societal problem.

However, transforming novel ideas into valuable solutions is far from straightforward. The innovation process is driven by a multitude of factors that lie outside of an innovator's control. An idea may need adapting, changing or redesigning

altogether to add value to an existing societal challenge. Being innovative requires an open, flexible and creative approach to deliver new solutions with impact.

VIA Water has worked closely with different innovators to develop new ideas into sustainable services or products to help local communities access safe water and sanitation. This has been a steep learning experience

for many of our innovators and important lessons have been learnt along the way.

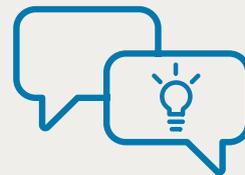
Here we have gathered together their best practices on what has been most important to them to innovate successfully. By sharing their innovator insights, we hope that this will empower other innovators embarking on a similar journey.

Key lessons learnt



Embrace mistakes and failures

as a source of learning and innovation



Take the time to learn and share knowledge

to continuously adapt your innovation further



Be flexible. Adapt to the unexpected

because things will not always go as you have planned



Surround yourself with people you can learn from

and obtain a fresh perspective



Remember why you are innovating

and use this to motivate you throughout your innovation journey

The *Innovator Insights* series shares valuable best practices from our VIA Water-supported innovators to help guide other innovators embarking on a similar journey. This series will provide practical input in relation to different themed topics that are important to the success of early-stage innovators.

Tips from our innovators

More project updates at www.viawater.nl/projects



Innovators: Rwanda Environment Care (REC), Sanitation Development Ltd., EFP Ltd., SNV

Country: Rwanda

Urban ecological sanitation in Kigali and Musanze

- Don't be fearful of making mistakes or errors - this is part of trying something new and is valuable experience



Innovators: NHance Development Partners (NDP)

Country: Ghana

Closing the water loop for car washing stations

- Understand that failure is an option but resolve to turn it into a lesson
- Be ready to accept criticisms and use them to improve on your innovation
- Seek input from people who may not be related to the innovation: a great idea to improve your innovation may come from your kid



Innovators: LeAF, MGL Consulting Engineers PLC, Adama Town Health Office

Country: Ethiopia

Simulation and gaming for grey water treatment

- Create an environment where all group members can speak up freely about challenges
- Gather a good team around you with the correct or complementary expertise to develop the innovation



Innovators: TRACE Ecotiles, Tereco Ltd RSA, WASTE

Country: Kenya

Roof tiles from recycled plastic and glass

- Don't be scared of failure - most innovations usually go through a certain phase of constant iteration before making any sense to the market
- Focus and listen keenly to your clients and their pain points



Innovators: MetaMeta, SASOL Foundation

Country: Kenya

Sponge Towns Kitui

- Involve the end-users of your innovation throughout your innovation process
- Be adaptive – things change all the time, so be prepared for that

About VIA Water:

VIA Water supports projects with innovative solutions for water problems facing cities in eight African countries. Through the programme, these solutions can be brought to life: with financial support, but also with the help of the (online) learning community. At the moment, VIA Water has a full portfolio: over 60 projects are being implemented in Mali, Benin, Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Senegal and Mozambique.

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