

Natural Innovation has been looking at the tricky issue of licensing, when their are needs to be met, but very different business environments between developing and western countries. We have been developing a standardised license to allow humanitarian licensing of technologies, from for-profits to non-profits and social ventures.

Challenge

The developing world needs every tool it can get to alleviate poverty in ways that do not increase carbon emissions or further damage fragile environments.

Western technologies often require considerable localisation both technically and in terms of business models, and this does not usually form part of the companies business plan.

Solution

Natural Innovation, is developing a standardised Humanitarian License to reduce the overhead of a for-profit Western company or University licensing a technology to a social venture.

It is intended to fill the same place for patents and Intellectual Property as the Creative Commons license fills for copyright.

Examples

Natural Innovation is working with a company that has a solar cooling technology and is developing cooling products with it for western markets. They have offered to license this technology for application in developing countries, and provide components at cost. While their team are doing this from their own personal conviction, the company will also benefit both in terms of PR and HR from this philanthropy.

Natural Innovation helped a company secured an emergency loan from a foundation. A humanitarian license was used to ensure that even in the event of bankruptcy or acquisition the IP could be licensed to a non-profit for such application.

Collaboration

Natural Innovation has been collaborating with [Inder Comar](#) of [Comar Law](#) on this license. As the project grows we will develop relationships with other lawyers, especially in different jurisdictions or with complementary expertise. The license will be open-sourced to ensure maximum availability. We are particularly interested in finding other companies and NGO's interested in trying out the license and sharing their experience or improvements.

Strategy and plan

As of May 2011 a draft has been produced, both in English and legalese and trialed with two projects.

Feedback from discussions with other potential users have identified some gaps that will be addressed.

The next step is to locate suitable examples and trial with them.

In parallel to this, we will develop a standardized “boiler-plate” license where different parts can be selected depending on need.

It may also be time to make more people aware of the license and to solicit further trials and improvements.

Finance

Natural Innovation is looking to raise \$100,000 to develop this license further and to enable efficient coordination and integration of the experience that will be generated from its early

applications.