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FACT SHEET

Social-economic benefits of deposit return systems for charities and other non-profit organisations

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Social-economic benefits of deposit return systems for charities and other non-profit organisations

- › Aside from the environmental benefits they achieve, deposit return systems can produce meaningful social-economic outcomes.
- › Proceeds from deposit donations can go towards charitable organisations and other non-profits working on projects to help people in need, or to improve the environment.



Background

Deposit return systems (DRS)—now in place in over 50 jurisdictions worldwide—continue to prove their effectiveness at achieving circular economy outcomes, including the minimisation of waste through the reuse and recycling of drinks containers. But it's not just the environmental benefits that are drawing governments' attention towards DRS. These systems can also generate meaningful social-economic outcomes in terms of additional revenue streams for charities and other non-profit organisations that benefit communities.

In many places with DRS, consumers have a choice of what to do with their refunded deposits; they can keep the money for themselves (e.g., in the form of a cash refund, credit to an online account, store credit), or they can donate it to charity. The latter is often done through an option on reverse vending machines (RVMs), where consumers have the option to donate their refund to one or a selection of registered charities by simply pressing a button on the machine. Consumers can also donate empty containers directly to a charitable organisation, who can then return the containers for a refund of the deposit(s). In some places, donating deposit refunds can also be done indirectly, such as through the purchase of lottery tickets.

According to 2019 survey published by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), a fifth of people in England would donate the cash they received through a DRS to charity, which could result in annual donations of more than £1 billion to good causes. A further 19% of respondents said they would donate their deposits 'most of the time', and 34% would donate at least 'some of the time'. CPRE's analysis found that this could lead to a further £1.3 billion in donations to local charitable causes from the deposits on glass and plastic drink containers.ⁱ A similar survey published by the Beverage Container Management Board (BCMB) in Alberta, Canada in May 2022 found that among the small percentage of Albertans that say they never return beverage containers to a depot, 20% indicated they donate the containers to charity instead.ⁱⁱ

As high inflation continues to weigh on the global economy, charities and other social-purpose organisations are forced to do more with less, as they face rapidly increasing costs and at the same time, a drastic rise in demand for their services. Unusually high inflation rates have resulted in pay cuts and a loss of purchasing power for both workers and organisations.ⁱⁱⁱ While the erosion of money's purchasing power caused by high inflation affects everyone, it has a proportionately higher impact on low-income families and individuals who were already struggling to meet their needs and who relied on non-profit services (e.g., food banks, women's shelters, health centres, sports and recreation programmes, etc.) to supplement their incomes. The situation presents a double-edged sword for charities and non-profits as need grows and costs increase.

In Canada, a recent report published by Canada Helps^{iv} showed that four out of five Canadians expect inflation and/or the prolonged impacts of the pandemic to negatively impact their financial situation. As a result, one in four (26%) Canadians expect to use or are already using charitable services in 2022, and one in four (25%) Canadians expect to give less in 2022 than they did in 2021.^v And charities and non-profits in the U.S. are facing similar struggles. According to Giving USA's 2022 giving report, although there was a 4% increase in total charitable giving from 2020 to 2021, donations failed to keep pace with the dramatic rate of inflation.^{vi}

In the U.K., research carried out in early 2022 by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) found that 71% of charity leaders are concerned about managing increased demand for their services, and that 35% believe their organisation will struggle to survive.^{vii} Alison Taylor, CEO of CAF Bank and Charity Services said: "After two years supporting their communities throughout the pandemic, they are also having to find the funds to pay higher costs. With tightening household budgets impacting donations, there is a perfect storm facing the sector."^{viii}

To help offset the impact of inflation, there is no doubt that charities and other non-profits would benefit from the additional revenues that could be derived from a DRS. Using a number of case studies from around the world, this fact sheet shows how DRSs can have wider social-economic benefits, by creating opportunities to provide financial support for social agencies and people in need.

Case Studies

Norway

Norwegian consumers that return their deposit beverage containers via RVMs can use their deposit refund to buy a lottery ticket that benefits charity. Each ticket in the recycling lottery (Pantelotteriet) costs 50 øre (NOK 0.50)^{xv}, so a small bottle gives four tickets in the lottery, while a large bottle gives six tickets. With each ticket, participants have the chance to win prizes worth NOK 50, 100, 1,000 or 1 million. On average, each 15th lottery participant wins.^{xv} Participants find out immediately whether they have won or not from the lottery ticket printed out by the RVM. As of the end of 2021, the lottery was available at over 3,400 RVMs throughout the country. The lottery is operated by Norsk Pantelotteri AS, a company jointly owned by the Red Cross (40%) and the Olav Thon Group, which is owned by the Olav Thon Foundation (60%).^{xvi}

The funds from Pantelotteri have become one of the most important sources of revenue for the Norwegian Red Cross. The organisation receives 34.5% of gross revenue, which is equal to 53.08% of revenue after prizes have been paid out.^{xvii} Half of the total revenue per machine is distributed to the local branch of the Red Cross in the immediate vicinity of the machine. A total of 35% is returned to participants in the form of prizes, and the retailers receive 9.75% for access to the RVM and the work involved in handling the lottery. The remaining 20.75% is used by Norsk Pantelotteri AS to cover operating, marketing, and investment costs, and any surplus is administered by the owners.

Since the lottery started in 2008, a total of NOK 502.7 million has been contributed to the Red Cross, and in 2021 alone, the organisation's annual income from the lottery amounted to NOK 112 million (just over NOK 107 million was paid out in winnings).^{xviii} The funds are used for providing homework assistance to young people, youth clubs, holidays for children who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity, and counteracting loneliness by visiting people who are alone or not able to leave their household.



Source: Pantelotteriet

Case Studies

Finland

In Finland, customers can participate in the recycling lottery (known as Onnenpanti) by returning their empty deposit containers to selected redemption points located in K-Food stores and S-Group's Varuboden-Osla stores.^{xiii} The lottery, which has been operational since December 2015, is now in place at more than 400 grocery stores across the country. To participate, customers simply place their empty bottles and cans into the RVM and press the ONNENPANTI button. The draw is carried out immediately and customers can see whether they won from the lottery ticket printed out by the machine. The value of one lottery ticket is 5-cents. This means that a customer returning a 0.5L bottle (worth a deposit refund of €0.20) would get in return four lottery tickets. Prizes include gift cards valued at €2, €5, €50, or €10,000.^{xiv} Smaller gift card winnings (€2, €5, and €50) are credited against purchases made in the store in question, while the main prize of €10,000 must be redeemed by contacting Onnenpanti.^{xv} Customers also have the option of donating their winnings to Onnenpanti's charity. Winnings must be claimed no later than two months after the expiration of the lottery ticket. Unclaimed winnings will be directed to the charity.^{xvi}

Currently, donations from the deposit lottery are directed to either the Finnish Red Cross, or to the activities of children's and youth sports clubs through the Finnish Olympic Committee (e.g., by hiring instructors, renting sports facilities or sports equipment).^{xvii} The Finnish Red Cross uses the funds collected through the lottery to support the operations of its local branches, which includes helping people in disaster situations and promoting overall health and well-being. Where the proceeds go exactly depends on which charity the store in question has chosen as its partner.

The Finnish Lottery Act states that at least 35% of the money from the lottery must be returned to participating consumers. Another 3.5%^{xviii} is distributed to the retailers who have the RVMs in their stores, and the rest is distributed to the charity (about 46.15%) and to the company running the lottery (Onnenpanti) to cover various administration, marketing, and operating costs.^{xix}

Source: Varuboden-Osla^{xx}

Case Studies

Germany

In March 2008, one of Germany's most popular discount grocer, Lidl, launched a partnership with Die Tafel, in which consumers could use RVMs to donate their deposit directly to charity. When returning their empties, customers decide whether they want a refund of their deposit or donate the entire amount, by pushing the appropriate button on the RVM. There are now around 6,400 RVMs with donation buttons in around 3,200 stores.^{xxi}

The proceeds from the deposit donations go to Die Tafel Deutschland eV, a national non-profit organisation that collects donations as well as food that would otherwise go to waste and distributes it to local food banks. There are currently more than 940 Die Tafel in Germany, which together support 1.65 million people in need of food throughout the country, nearly one third of which are children and youth.^{xxii}

Since the project began, Lidl customers across Germany have donated more than €27 million to Die Tafel Deutschland.^{xxiii} These deposit donations have supported more than 3,180 food bank projects, and also support projects for children and youth, senior citizens and refugees, among other things. Tafel also uses the donations to buy refrigerators and/or expand their logistics by purchasing electric cars, for example.



Source: Lidl

Estonia

In Estonia, approximately 330 RVMs across the country (~50% of all RVMs in Estonia) have been installed with a special button that allows consumers returning their empty beverage containers to donate their deposit refunds to charity.^{xxv} Every cent from these donations goes to Aitan Lapsi (a children's charity fund established in 2011), where it is used to help disadvantaged children participate in experiences related to music, arts and culture. For example, funds are used to help children attend theatre performances (in cooperation with EST Ministry of Culture); almost all theatres in Estonia have joined the charity project, promising to match donations, effectively lowering the price of theatre admission by 50% for disadvantaged youth.^{xxvi} Schoolchildren are also taken to art museums, where they can participate in practical art classes (in cooperation with Estonian Art Museum Foundation). Other examples of projects funded by the charity as a result of the DRS include the establishment of portable libraries in hospitals all over Estonia, that have children's departments, as well as in rural areas to encourage reading. Some of the projects are carried out in cooperation with the government, where by Aitan Lapsi contributes 50% of the funds for the project and the government matches the other 50%.^{xxvii}

As of November 2020, the people of Estonia donated their deposit refunds nearly 1 million times, for a total of more than €1.1 million.^{xxviii}



Source: Aitan Lapsi (Facebook)

Case Studies

Sweden

Since 2004, Swedish consumers can donate the deposits from their recycled bottles and cans by visiting one of 3,160 participating grocery stores (the largest ones are ICA, COOP, Axfood, and Lidl) and pressing the 'aid button' on RVMs.^{xxx}

The beneficiary of the deposit donations are different charitable organisations depending on the grocery store chain. Vi Agroforestry, a charity dedicated to poverty reduction and improving the environment in Africa through tree planting and support for farmers, is one example of a charity that's benefited from Sweden's deposit return system.^{xxx} During 2019, Swedish consumers donated SEK 6.4 million to the organisation^{xxx}, which corresponds to around 319,000 new trees in Eastern African countries (Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania), where Vi Agroforestry operates.^{xxxii}

Swedish consumers can also donate the deposits from their recycled bottles and cans by visiting one of almost 70 recycling centres located across Sweden, where Returpack (system operator) has placed large RVMs called Pantamera Express. Through this initiative, a total of SEK 2.8 million was donated to different charity organisations in 2022.^{xxxiii}

Returpack also partners with a number of ski resorts, camping sites, festivals, and amusement parks to help raise funds. These organisations collect the bottles and cans left behind by visitors and donate the deposit refund from these containers to charitable organisations and other non-profits. In 2022, a total of SEK 8 million was donated by Swedish consumers in this way.^{xxxiv}



When you recycle your cans and bottles this way it contributes to combating both poverty and climate change. It is a double benefit. In the countries we work in, people are marginalised and in these challenging times, with the global Corona crisis, our work is more important than ever. We are incredibly grateful for the support we receive.”

Eva Åberg, Vi Agroforestry's Director

Case Studies

South Australia, Australia

In South Australia, container deposits can be donated to Scout Groups, who use the money to help them purchase camping and outdoor activity equipment, boats and operating expenses for their Scout Halls. The money from deposit donations is also used to assist with the costs of maintaining their campsites, activity centres, and activity support groups, all of which provide activities for Scouts across the state. These activities include things like flying, diving climbing, canoeing, land yachting, performing arts, and archery.^{xxxv} Some groups have raised close to \$2,000 through these donations in a year, making up a significant source of their revenues.^{xxxvi}

DONATE YOUR 10C CONTAINERS AND SUPPORT FLAGSTAFF HILL SCOUTS

Containers accepted include:

- Soft drinks all types
- Water (plain, still or carbonated)
- Fruit drinks and some juices up to 3litres
- Sports drinks
- Ice teas
- Flavoured milk up to and including 600 mL
- Yakult bottles
- Beer bottles and cans
- Non alcoholic wine
- Pre mixed spirit

Your donation supports our Group and Scout Recycling Centres
Visit www.flagstaffhill.sa.scouts.com.au/recycling for more info

Scout
Recycling
Centre

Source: Scouts SA

Australia (National)

In the aftermath of the devastating wildfire of 2019/2020 that destroyed over 12 million hectares of bushland and forests, TOMRA launched a nationwide recycling initiative called “Cans for Koalas” to give Australians the opportunity to donate their empty beverage containers to help provide ongoing care and recovery to wildlife. Every container donated contributes 10-cents to the cause, and all proceeds are donated to WWF’s Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund.^{xi}

As of January 2021, a total of AUD \$173,000 had been raised through the initiative.^{xii}

Queensland, Australia

Since its launch in 2018, Queensland’s DRS has had a positive impact on communities across the state. According to the system operator’s 2021-22 annual report, \$7.3 million in container refunds has been invested back into Queensland communities through charities and community groups since the scheme began, including \$2.6 million in the 2021-22 financial year alone.^{xxxvii} Almost 6,000 charities have registered with the scheme since it began, including 1,156 in 2021-22 alone. CQ Pet Rescue is just one example of an organisation that has benefited from the state’s DRS. The charity, which saves animals on euthanasia lists in local council pounds and catteries, receives no government funding or subsidies. From November 2018 to October 2020, the organisation raised more than \$38,000 in container refunds.^{xxxviii}



The community has been a massive part of this project and their support has made such a difference. The local Maraboon Tavern gives us all its cans and bottles for recycling, as do many other local businesses. The scheme is incredibly easy to engage with—the funds are simply deposited into our bank account, ready to be used.”

Susan Consedine, CQ Pet Rescue’s Treasurer



Source: CQ Pet Rescue Inc.

Case Studies

Alberta, Canada

Alberta Cans for Kids is a fundraising initiative launched by the Alberta Bottle Depot Association (ABDA) in 2009. Under the program, consumers can donate their deposit beverage containers to Ronald McDonald House Charities Alberta, Stollery Children’s Hospital Foundation, and Alberta Children’s Hospital Foundation. Together, these organisations support and provide accommodations and much needed medical care to children living in Alberta.^{xlv}

Unlike many other programmes, there is no ‘donation button’ on RVMs. Instead, there is a bin set aside at recycling depots with special signage indicating it is part of the Alberta Cans for Kids Program. Consumers wishing to donate their containers place them directly in those bins, from which the depot operator collects them for recycling and directs the deposit money directly to one of the partner organisations. Since its inception, the programme has raised a total of \$900,000.^{xlvi}

Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada

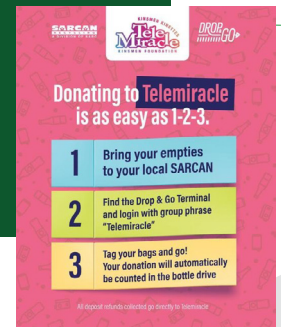
In the Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador, charities, schools, and community groups are able to register for a charitable account with a Green Depot (return facility), and anyone returning used beverage containers can donate their refund to the group using the group’s phone number. In 2019-20, 274 charities collected over 1.4 million beverage containers resulting in deposit refunds of approximately \$74 million. In addition, 618 community groups in Newfoundland and Labrador collected over 2.1 million beverage containers, resulting in refunds of approximately \$113,000.^{xlvii}

During the school year, schools that register with the Multi-Materials Stewardship Board (MMSB)’s Get Matched! programme earn twice the refund from beverage containers returned to a Green Depot. Matched funds are paid directly to the school through direct deposit to the school’s bank account. Many schools have used matched funds to support environmental programmes around the school and in the classroom, for example, by purchasing additional recycling bins or building a shed to store recyclables.^{xlviii} During the 2021-22 fiscal year, the school programme collected approximately 2.6 million units, resulting in \$135,000 in matched funds being contributed to schools.^{xlix}

Saskatchewan, Canada

In Saskatchewan, people can donate their deposit refunds by simply dropping off their empty containers at a local Drop & Go depot and advising the depot staff on which participating charity they would like to donate to. To register as a participating charity with SARCAN (DRS operator), organisations create a Drop & Go account. When registering, the organisation chooses a phrase that is unique to their group, and this phrase is then used by customers when they donate their containers at a Drop & Go kiosk. The deposit refund is then paid directly to the fundraiser.^{xliii}

SARCAN’s designated charity of choice is Telemiracle, an annual telethon organised by the Kinsmen Foundation which helps Saskatchewan residents access special needs equipment and medical assistance that would otherwise be unattainable.^{xliv}



Source: SARCAN Recycling

Ontario, Canada

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, The Beer Store (TBS) facilitated empty container donations to raise money for local food banks and health centres. In 2020, its customers donated approximately CAD\$2.3 million to approximately 165 communities through this initiative. In addition, TBS customers donated over \$8,000 in deposit refunds to support the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada (LLSC), an organisation that leads research projects dedicated to finding a cure for leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin’s disease and myeloma, and providing support for those affected by blood cancers.^{xliii}

Case Studies

Oregon, United States

In Oregon, non-profit organisations can register to be featured on the BottleDrop website, allowing existing BottleDrop account holders to make direct donations online. Anyone with a BottleDrop account can donate to a registered charity of their choice by simply returning their empty deposit containers and transferring the refunds to a BottleDrop Featured Fundraising account. In 2021 alone, BottleDrop account holders made a total of 2,792 online donations.ⁱ

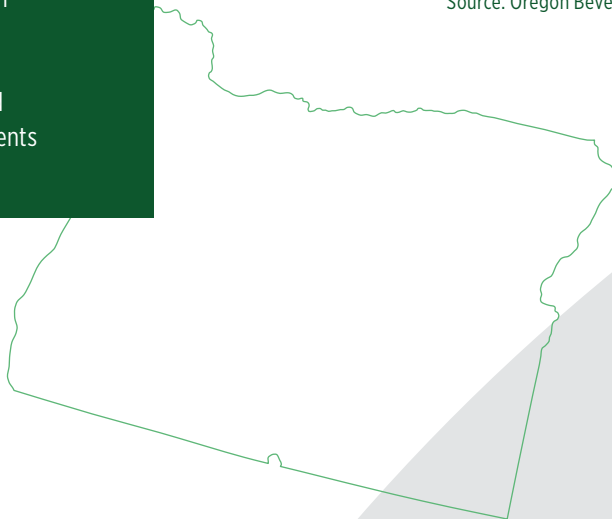
Another way in which the DRS benefits non-profits in Oregon is through Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative (OBRC)'s BottleDrop Give programme. To participate, non-profits simply sign up for the programme and then distribute Blue Bags to their supporters, who then fill the bags up with their empty containers and bring them back to the non-profit, or drop them off at any BottleDrop or partner retail locations. The deposit refunds go directly into the non-profit's online account, from which they can withdraw the money at any time. In 2021 alone, 4,733 non-profits throughout Oregon participated in the programme, and a total of \$5.1 million was raised (up 49% from 2020).ⁱⁱ Non-profits have raised over \$17.2 million since the programme began.

In 2021, 12 non-profits were awarded grants through the OBRC's BottleDrop Fund.ⁱⁱⁱ This Fund awards larger grants to support non-profits working to build community, protect the environment, and help vulnerable people. The following are just a few recipients of the Oregon Community Foundation BottleDrop Fund in 2021:

- › AdoptOneBlock, supporting volunteers who collect litter on over 6,800 city blocks in Portland
- › Children's Forest of Central Oregon, supporting environmental education for K-8th grade students
- › Repair PDX, offering skills-based education for homeless youth.



Source: Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative



Endnotes

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The logo for 'reloop' is displayed in white. The word 'reloop' is in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The 'o' in 'loop' is stylized as a circular arrow with a leaf-like shape at its top. To the right of 'reloop', the tagline 'resources remain resources' is written in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font, stacked in three lines.

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