

The New Age Social Entrepreneurs



“I used to stop here often for tea and recently came to know that he (pan shop owner/ NTO) is selling condoms. It is very helpful for truckers like us who are on the roads all the time; during our short breaks we can buy condoms along with pan, cigarettes”

Sanjeev Singh
Truck driver , Daniyawan Bazar, Bihar
Bought condoms at an NTO located on the highway

“Footfall has increased since we started stocking Ujjwal products. I am currently selling condoms, injectable contraceptives and pills. Some clients from low income groups have been buying Ujjwal products that are nominally priced. I am happy because increased footfall means more business. I wish there is more margin in these products, I could earn some profits.”

Abhitesh Kumar (38)
Traditional Outlet owner (Chemist) stocking Ujjwal products since last 6 months
Sudha Nursing Home, Paschim Darwaja, Bihar

Sustaining the efforts

As a result of the project intervention, communities will be able to identify NTOs/TOs where these contraceptives are available. The outlets will be in a position to stock more quantities and brands once they are recognised within the communities. This will allow sustainability of the supply chain. The project has started several communication activities including market town activities that will support an increase in sales of these products.

Riding on robust FMCG supply chain to ensure wider reach: The project is exploring partnerships with FMCG companies, manufacturing agencies and other marketing channels. The strategy allows piggy banking on their distribution networks to improve reach of FP products in the category C&D villages.

Sustaining the supply chain with maternal and child

health products : Currently, the project is ensuring that low-end FP/RH brands are available at a low cost. At the same time, the project is in discussion with marketing agencies to make higher priced brands (and other non-FP/RH products) available for high-end and less poor consumers to maintain viability of the business model, such as high margin MCH products like ORS in the product basket.

High sales volumes in A&B category villages: To reduce high distribution cost the project services TOs and NTOs through distributors in A&B category villages as well. TOs and NTOs in C&D category villages cater to small population groups with low demand, resulting in little business and high cost of operations to provide access to products, while outlets in A&B category villages generate high volumes of sales. Servicing outlets in A&B category villages substitutes and recovers some costs of distribution in C&D category villages.

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Contributing toward improving access to family planning products in their communities

Susmita Das, runs a fancy store (ladies corner) 'Sai Baba Ladies Corner' in Patasahi (a D category village with 1000-1999 population), Khurda District, Odisha. The store also caters to the daily needs i.e. groceries and vegetables, of the people in the village. Not being able to sustain on their agricultural produce, Susmita (27) and her 29 year old husband started the store in 2005 and since then have never looked back. They procure the ladies' products (beauty products and accessories) from Cuttack and Kolkata, making a visit once in two months. Susmita mans the store during the day, while her husband manages the sales during the evening. The couple have a nine year old son and took a decision on their family size three years ago when Susmita opted for sterilisation.

Susmita became a part of the Ujjwal efforts eight months ago, when the project networked her

store as a non-traditional outlet (NTO) under the social marketing programme. She stocks condoms (both male and female), oral contraceptive pills (OCPs), emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs) and sanitary napkins. She tells us that most of the young women (18-27 years) in her village share a good rapport with her, since they visit the store quite often. As a result, they do not hesitate in approaching her to buy contraceptives, emergency pills and sanitary napkins. Her eyes light up when she proudly declares that through this endeavour her family is contributing their bit to the health and development of their village. The women in her village now have regular access to choice of contraceptives available with her and at most times find that 'someone' in her with whom they can discuss the advantages and side effects of a particular contraceptive/RH product. During our conversation, she informs Mr Gangadhar (Area Sales Manager) that she has been able to sell four female condom pieces during the month, as a result of her one to one interactions and advocacy with the women on different FP methods, during



their visit to the store. Her interactions with the Ujjwal sales officers have expanded her knowledge on these FP methods, their use and possible side effects, which allows her to share the information with her patrons. The Ujjwal sales officers make a visit once in two months and sell stock, based on the outlet's sales and requirement. Our new age social entrepreneur informs us that the monthly sales from the store average up to Rs 30,000-40,000, and the newly added Ujjwal FP/RH products' sale gross up to Rs 3000-4000 per month. The demand for sanitary napkins is very high among young, adolescent and young married women. She stocks about three brands of sanitary napkins, one out of which is an Ujjwal brand (Sakhi sanitary napkins). With such high demand, she suggests that the sales team should introduce a scheme of adding two sanitary napkins free with each packet, to allow improvement in sales. The sale of condoms (20-25 per month) and OCPs is quite high amongst the community in her village. Upon enquiring about the demand of FMCG products like fairness creams, biscuits etc., Susmita states that it is high and these products would add scope to the market. She would like to add such products, if introduced, at her store.

Susmita's dotting mother-in-law who was listening to our conversation interrupts to say that her entrepreneurial daughter has been quite a support

for their family and her son. With all exuberance, Susmita offers us to have a look at her recent stock of bangles and earrings; and promises to offer a discount on our buys.

The penetration tracking survey results in Odisha (baseline and midline) suggest that ladies' corners/ beauty shops are emerging as important outlets for stocking FP/RH products as current availability of at least one, two and three of these three products (condoms, OCP and S.Napkins) respectively, in these shops has increased from 41.7%, 17.4%, and 0.8% at baseline to 50%, 21.3% and 1.9% by the midline. The penetration of condoms at the ladies' corners/ beauty shops has increased from 22.0% in the first round (August-October 2013) to 26.9% in second round (March-April 2014). Beauty shops/ladies corners are the third common stockists of condoms after chemists and Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs). Similarly, availability of sanitary napkins at ladies corners has increased from 54.8 to 69.4% between the two rounds, and these outlets are the second most common stockists of this product after chemists.

In order to understand the changes in penetration of FP/RH products in rural areas of Bihar and Odisha, particularly in C and D category villages – Project Ujjwal conducted two rounds of penetration tracking surveys (baseline and midline) in 2013-14.

Community health workers with a larger purpose

"The demand and sales uptake for oral contraceptive pills and sanitary napkins is very high in my village. Adolescent girls and unmarried women have inhibitions in approaching us for contraceptives as they feel the information may reach their families. By increasing the sales of sanitary napkins to these girls, I am trying to build a friendly relationship with them. This will give me an opportunity to understand their contraceptive needs and I will be able to provide the correct information on use."

Geetanjali Maharana, is an Ujjwal Saathi based in Sehora Singhala village, Kokudakhandi Block, Behramapur, Odisha. She has been working as a community health worker since five years. Apart from OCPs, ECPs and sanitary napkins, Geetanjali also stocks all brands of condoms (under Ujjwal), stating that HIV prevalence is high in her village. She is trying to promote use of condoms through sale of condoms and is motivated to improve access to contraceptives in her village. Her sales from Ujjwal products average upto Rs. 2,000 to 2,200 per month.



Ujjwal Saathis or community health volunteers part of the Ujjwal network have been oriented on FP and are also stocking FP/RH products for sales under the social entrepreneurship model, encouraged by the project. In the long run, the Ujjwal Saathis can act as depot holders for FP products and thus reduce the distribution cost of reaching the C&D category villages.



A bird's view of the Ujjwal Social Marketing programme

The social marketing component under Project Ujjwal aims to increase access to FP products with a focus on rural and underserved areas of Bihar and Odisha. A total market approach is adopted wherein the efforts are directed towards expanding the market for FP services and supplies by increasing use within each wealth quintile. Socially marketed brands of contraceptives at subsidised prices are being made available through the distribution network to increase affordability for the lower wealth quintiles. Brands have also been introduced to meet different perceptions of quality, of consumers, as well as their aspirations in an effort to expand the overall market for contraceptive products.

The project has directed efforts toward expanding the market for access to FP/RH products within each wealth quintile by servicing 32,008 social marketing outlets (both traditional (TOs) and non-traditional outlets (NTOs) across Bihar and Odisha, out of which 19,329 outlets are being serviced in C&D category villages.

The outlets include TOs and NTOs (preferably RMPs or community health workers). The traditional outlets include pharmacists and medical stores, while the NTOs include RMPs and informal providers, *panwadi* shops,

local general grocery shops, local *kirana* shops and community based outlets.

Different contraceptive products (including condoms, OCPs, ECPs, injectable contraceptives and IUCDs); sanitary napkins, pregnancy testing kits and medical abortion kits are being made available through the distribution network. The HLPPT (service delivery partners) field force monitor stock inventory levels to ensure that there is no stock out position at the stockist and at retailers /depot holders and also inform them about the correct use of various products and management of side effects.

Strengthening the social marketing outlets in C and D category villages (C-category villages (with a population of 2000 to 4999) and D-category villages (with a population of 1000 to 1999)) is one of the important strategies of the project, so as to improve access to modern spacing methods, especially to young couples. The project team has established an average of at least two outlets in each of the 3,365 C&D category villages across the 38 selected districts in Bihar and 3122 C&D category villages across 30 districts of Odisha. There are challenges in establishing and servicing retail outlets in C&D category villages, especially with reference to

non-traditional outlets. These are small temporary outlets manned by multiple people at different times during the day, and do not have fixed opening and closing hours. Since these outlets are informal, they may not have sign boards of outlet/shop name. Being non-regularised, these outlet owners are also insecure about sharing contact details, may shift location of the outlet/ store and being financially challenged they may even change contact details frequently. These stores/shops are still a source of daily needs and essential utility items for C&D category villages and hence the project is servicing these outlets to mainstream FP in these areas.

The project has seen an upward trend in sales from the Ujjwal outlets in the last eight months, with the sales totalling up to 16 million condom pieces, 1.6 million OCP Cycles, 69,000 ECPs, 33,000 MA Kits and 24,000 Pregnancy testing kits across the two states.

The project team has ensured reaching out to the young women and girls in both Bihar and Odisha with sales of sanitary napkins improving and totalling up to 5,40,000 till June, 2014.

Increased access to family planning products through social marketing

