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 reach: The project is exploring partnerships with market town activities that will support.

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 backing 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.

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

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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 and alcohol.

Sanjeev Singh
Truck driver, Danjewalan 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 Darwaza, Bihar"
Susmita offers us to have a look at her recent stock of bangles and earrings; and promises to offer a discount on our buys.

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, an Ujjwal Saathi based in Sehora Singhala village, Kokudakhandi Block, Beharamapur, 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 up to Rs 2,000 to 2,200 per month.

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 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.