



GBCHealth

Mobilizing Business for a Healthier World

Reaching the Health Millennium Development Goals: *The Critical Role of India's Business Sector*

November 13, 2013

Investment Case #5

Corporate Support for Women's Empowerment,
Reproductive & Maternal Health

Women's empowerment is one of the critical foundations for prosperous and peaceful societies. When women suffer unequal opportunities to reach their full potential, nations cannot sustain high rates of economic growth and social development. The relationship between a woman's level of education and the health and welfare of her family, particularly her children, is profound. Societies where women cannot exercise control over their personal safety and their lives including who and when to marry, when to have a child and how many children to have, whether or not to complete an education or not, and whether or not to earn an income and to have discretion over how that income is spent, will experience higher rates of maternal death and poor health.

In 2012, 56,000 women died of pregnancy related complications in India. The leading direct causes of maternal death include hemorrhage (35 percent), hypertension (17 percent), unsafe abortion (10 percent) and infection (7 percent). Lack of access to quality, affordable reproductive, prenatal care, skilled delivery and emergency obstetric care are critical factors. 45 percent of adult women do not use contraception, 63 percent do not get adequate prenatal care and half deliver without a skilled attendant. The young age of many mothers increases the risk of maternal death and injury. One in every two adolescent girls in India is married by 18; one in every 5 by the age of 15.

Evidence suggests that maternal deaths could be reduced and Millennium Development Goal 5 achieved if adolescent girls and women had access to:

1. Prenatal Care: Pregnant women should visit a qualified medical professional at least four times during pregnancy to monitor weight gain and receive nutritional supplements, receive immunizations (particularly tetanus toxoid), and manage preeclampsia and infection.



2. Skilled Delivery: Women should deliver their babies with an attendant skilled in delivery and must have access to emergency obstetric care with staff trained and equipped to respond to hemorrhage and complications from preeclampsia, even if they deliver at home.

3. Reproductive Health: Adolescent girls and women should have access to information about family planning and a choice of quality, affordable methods. Meeting women's needs for family planning not only reduces maternal deaths but also reduces child deaths and increases family income.

4. Education: Increasing female literacy in the high population northern states from the current 50 percent will have a major impact across all areas of women's health.

How Can a Corporation Help?

- Infrastructure, Product Development & Service Delivery:** manufacture, market and distribute products and services that will reduce maternal mortality in the communities where deaths are concentrated.

Forum Partners



THE **MDG** Health Alliance



Forum Sponsors



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If all Indian women had finished high school the child mortality rate would be 61% lower



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56,000 women died of pregnancy related causes in India in 2010



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Unhygienic birth practices are a leading cause of maternal infection and death

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- **Advocacy, Awareness, Education and Behavior Change:** support campaigns that increase female literacy, enable girls to stay in school and complete secondary education and provide information to at-risk mothers on how to have a healthy pregnancy and safe delivery.
- **Innovation:** provide funding and/or technical assistance to experiment with innovative approaches (e.g. nutrition vouchers for at-risk adolescent girls conditional on attending literacy classes, funding for social business models that provide family planning to the poor).



corporate contributions to reducing maternal mortality. Other partners include Hindustan Latex Family Planning Promotion Trust, Pathfinder International, World Health Partners and the White Ribbon Alliance for Safe Motherhood.

"PROJECT UNNATI"

For the Bansidhar and Ila Panda Foundation, the CSR arm of the IMFA Group, women's empowerment is one of four priority investments. The foundation supports projects in five districts in the Indian state of Odisha to strengthen women's capacity to manage their lives. Project Unnati is an all-encompassing program that addresses maternal and child health, health literacy and empowerment through an integrated self help approach (i.e. finance and livelihood, education, health, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene). The goal is to provide a platform for social action where women become agents of change for the development of their own communities.

"CONDOM BINDAAS BOL"

In 2006, Weber Shandwick and ICICI Bank supported a public awareness campaign to encourage safe sex, destigmatize discussion of contraception and stimulate sales of condoms in eight northern states.

The campaign urged people to Condom Bindaas Bol (Hindi for "Say Condoms Freely") and increased use of condoms among married men from 38 to 60 percent. Other partners include the Government of India and USAID.

"BEL BAJAO"

In 2008, advertising agency Ogilvy and Mather produced pro bono an award-winning campaign to encourage men to stop domestic violence by "Bel Bajao" (Hindi for "Ring the Bell") - interrupting violence as it occurs. 130 million people have been exposed to the campaign. Other partners include human rights organization Breakthrough, the Government of India and the United Nations.

"LIFESPING HOSPITALS"

Since 2005, this chain of no-frills, high quality private maternity hospitals in Andhra Pradesh has been offering care at 30 to 50 percent below market prices. It cross-subsidizes to offer tiered pricing so it is affordable to families with very low incomes. To date it has delivered 23,000 healthy babies with plans for rapid expansion. Other partners include Acumen Fund and HLL Lifecare.

Examples of Corporate Support

For companies with a large female customer base, who employ a largely female workforce or who operate in areas where the status of women is the underlying cause of poor health and maternal deaths, investments in women's empowerment, reproductive and maternal health can have a significant impact. Below are some of the leading examples of corporate engagement in Millennium Development Goal 5:

"MSD FOR MOTHERS"

In 2013, pharmaceutical giant MSD India launched "MSD for Mothers" with funding of \$US10 million over three years to improve the quality of care pregnant women receive through the private sector. Aiming to reach 500,000 pregnant women in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Jharkhand the initiative is one of the largest

Next Steps

If your company is interested in supporting an existing program, in establishing a new initiative or forming a new partnership with other stakeholders to reduce maternal deaths, and empower women, please contact Shuma Panse at spanse@gbchealth.org or Rahul Bhargava at rbhargava@mdghealthenvoy.org.



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