

Marketing Case Study

Increasing Awareness and Access to Long-term and Permanent Methods through Clinic Franchising & Health Fairs in Nepal

BACKGROUND

Between 1966 and 2001, the proportion of Nepalese women using modern contraceptive method increased from 15 to 39%. Despite the overall increase in contraceptive prevalence, IUDs continued to represent a relatively small portion of the method mix, increasing from 0.1% in 1986 to just 0.4% in 2001.

The public sector is the main provider of health care in Nepal, however, the private-for-profit and private-non-profit (NGO) sectors have grown rapidly since the restoration of democracy in 1990. There is an increased utilization of private sector for family planning for a number of reasons including the negative perception of public sector services and a positive perception of private sector (Stash, 1999).¹ In 2001, NGOs and the private sector supplied 15% of contraceptives in Nepal.

In 2003, with funding from USAID, PSI/Nepal created the Sun Quality Health Network (SQH) to enhance the quality of family planning services in the private sector, and increase access to a range of methods, including IUDs. Built on a social franchise model that comprises partnerships with existing local health care providers, SQH has grown from 53 to 228 outlets that integrate family planning, maternal and child health, and HIV/AIDS/STI service delivery in the central, eastern, and western regions. SQH offers providers opportunities for extensive training and on-going support and supervision. Providers also benefit from the introduction of new products and services in their clinics, and association with a known and trusted network. Providers, in turn, commit to the provision of high quality services and products at a price affordable to low-income populations.

As health care is scarce in rural areas, PSI/Nepal uses mobile service units to address the lack of access to clinical services. The mobile clinics have been successfully deployed in conjunction with health fairs and offer high quality, confidential IUD and Voluntary Surgical Contraception (VSC) counseling and services, as well as a broader range of family planning methods. All family planning activities are implemented by PSI/Nepal under the guidance of His Majesty's Government of Nepal, in particular the Family Health Division, as well as in collaboration with key partners such as the Nepal Family Health Program.

¹ Stash, Sharon. Explanations of Unmet Need for Contraception in Chitwan, Nepal. *Studies in Family Planning* 1999; 30 [4]:267-287

Training & Quality Control Quality Control

Formatted in accordance with IUD National Health Training Centre (NHTC) protocols, PSI/Nepal offers IUD training on 3 levels. Courses range from a 2-day refresher course for doctors with previous IUD training, to a three-day classroom and 5-day clinical course for new nurses. To date, 60 provider ‘champions’ at 39 SQH outlets have been trained in IUD insertion and removal, and serve as a referral point for the 228 outlets in the SQH network.

SQH quality standards and protocols, developed in collaboration with His Majesty’s Government of Nepal and other key stakeholders, are enforced by two PSI Quality Assurance Officers and two Field Assistants who visit outlets approximately twice a month. “Mystery clients,” who pose as couples seeking family planning services, are also used to monitor provider performance, including the quality of counseling and accuracy of information given. Low performers are identified and encouraged to improve in specific areas of weakness through clinical refresher training. Providers that consistently fail to offer the minimum standards of service delivery are expelled from the network.

Marketing/Communications

Health fairs conducted around the Katmandu Valley promote SQH and raise awareness of the wide range of services offered.

In addition to informing the public about the services offered at SQH, the fairs are utilized to provide free general health checkups, to educate audiences on family planning options and to increase access to reproductive health services and products (including IUDs and vasectomies) through a mobile clinic. Health fairs are intended to be fun for the entire family and feature street plays, a short drama film, games and magic shows to entertain and educate crowds on how reproductive health issues impact their families. A short video on long-term and permanent methods is also shown. Health fairs reach those who may not have been reached through traditional media and offer accurate, comprehensive information and a dialogue on family planning options.

In addition to health fairs, behavior change communications activities are conducted in carpet factories, breweries, slum areas, and other targeted locations where increased need is identified. Additionally, SQH collaborates with local commercial and non-profit partners including Maxpro, N-TAG, INDRENI, the Chaudhary Group, Lions Clubs and Rotary International to help create awareness for the range of family planning services provided by the SQH Network.

RESULTS

The health fairs were an effective means to promote SQH and to increase awareness and availability of long-term and permanent methods to populations who might not otherwise have access. Since employing mobile outreach clinics, SQH clinics have recorded increasing uptake of long-acting methods such as the IUD both through mobile and stationary clinics. Since the initiatives began, 1820 IUDs have been provided, as well as 5,968 VSC services (male and female).