

Comprehensive Approach to IUD Promotion in Pakistan

Background

The proportion of married women using modern contraceptives in Pakistan grew steadily in the last part of the 20th Century, from 6% in 1984 to approximately 20% in 2001. IUD use, both in absolute terms and in proportion to the overall contraceptive method mix also increased during this period. In 2001, after male condoms, IUDs were the most popular reversible modern contraceptive method in Pakistan, representing 17% of the method mix, compared with 11% in the mid-1980s.

The private sector provides 70 percent of all health services in Pakistan. Although Pakistan's private sector is well developed, private health facilities are disproportionately based in urban areas and focus on providing curative services. The quality of services varies, as the private sector is highly unregulated. Relatively few private providers offer family planning or other reproductive health services due to limited training in this area, as well as greater profit incentives to provide curative services. The national medical curriculum includes less than a day dedicated to FP/RH during five years of coursework; therefore most general practitioners have a limited understanding of FP/RH issues.

To address this issue, in 1995 PSI and its Pakistan affiliate, Greenstar, developed a social franchise network of private doctors, paramedics, and pharmacists to increase access to reproductive health care by low-income Pakistanis. Providers were trained in reproductive health counseling and service provision, including IUD insertion and removal. The Multiload® IUD became the first IUD available in the private sector, complementing government initiatives to promote the method.

Best Practices

Marketing & Communications

The Franchise Brand

IUD communications took place within the broader context of reproductive health behavior change communications and promotion of the Greenstar Network. Branding of

Greenstar products and outlets is a key feature of the franchise, assuring clients of quality and affordability. Consumer research was conducted in order to identify a franchise symbol that would be attractive easily recognized by low-literacy consumers, and have a tag line that would be associated with quality and reliability.

Greenstar campaign messages were designed to address key barriers to family planning, including a lack of confidence in the safety and/or efficacy of methods available, lack of knowledge about where to seek quality services, and lack of social support for family planning, especially from husbands. The messages also highlighted the availability of products and services and linked clients to delivery points displaying the Greenstar signage. The campaign's call to action was to encourage low-income families to seek advice about family planning from Greenstar providers.

In the case of the IUD, a lack of knowledge about benefits of long-term methods was a barrier to use. Besides training healthcare providers and ensuring IUD availability in a large number of clinics, Greenstar promoted awareness and benefits of Multiload® as a long-term family planning option through client-directed education and advertising. Multiload® promotional spots were aired frequently on TV and radio to enhance awareness and demand for the method while addressing client misconceptions. For example, formative research showed that women and men feared the IUD as a foreign object which could do harm to a woman's body. A television advertisement which featured a provider holding an IUD in his hand emphasized the small size of the IUD. This ad was cited by a number of women as being informative and helping them to realize that the IUD was smaller than they initially had thought, and reduced some of their fears about the method. Greenstar campaign activities were aimed at making the concept of family planning more acceptable and reducing stigma associated with seeking services. To complement mass media activities, Greenstar educated clients on the IUD along with other methods through on-going, innovative community-based promotional activities, including:

- *'Mohalla'* (i.e. neighborhood) Meetings: During *Mohalla* meetings, women are encouraged to discuss their reproductive health questions, concerns and needs in an intimate, confidential environment. The counseling provided at these venues increases the comfort level of potential clients as well as the value of information they receive. Some *Mohalla* meetings have also been arranged for male participants.
- Workplace Meetings: These are designed to encourage male participation in reproductive health and usually take place at factories employing large numbers of men.
- Free Medical Camps: Organized in the vicinity of Greenstar clinics, the Free Medical Camps integrate family planning with primary health care, providing general examinations, RH counseling, and basic service provision, including family planning.
- Contraceptive Camps: These are similar to the Medical Camps but limited to the provision of RH/FP-related support and offer free contraceptive counseling, services and products.

- Greenstar also regularly sponsors community sports and musical events, as well as other festivities.
- Finally, Greenstar uses public relations and advocacy measures to shape the views of influential groups, including policy makers, journalists, and thought leaders.

Sales and Distribution

Sales of Multiload are carried out by Greenstar Sales Promotion Officers (SPOs) and are restricted to trained female providers and approved institutions. The SPOs form an important part of the support system designed for the Greenstar franchisees in ensuring regular product supply and information dissemination.

Greenstar has a total of 30 SPOs nationwide, who are responsible for detailing and selling Greenstar products directly and generating orders from Pharmacists in their territories, forming an important link between providers and Greenstar.

Training & Support

Greenstar training curricula were developed based on training needs assessments of providers and using JHPIEGO's competency –based approach. Training imparted for IUDs by Greenstar comprises an intensive course, designed to train female doctors and selected lady health visitors in RH/FP counseling, IUD insertion, hormonal methods prescription and administration, side effects management, infection prevention, and clinic management. The training comprises a competency-based 40-hour course, usually arranged over 10 half-days during which both classroom and clinical training is imparted. As at the end of April 2002, a network of almost 4,000 female providers had been successfully trained in this course. In addition to these female doctors, Greenstar has trained approximately 10,000 providers (male doctors and pharmacists and female paramedics) in hormonal counseling and screening. The network is being maintained through refresher trainings as well as additional full trainings to compensate for provider attrition. *Greenstar* employs its trainers full-time, avoiding the use of outside consultants who may or may not be available when required. The management also believes that regular employment engenders a greater sense of ownership among the trainers.

Trainers also carry out regular *support visits* to clinics in order to answer technical questions, assist with procedures and help solve any problems the provider might face in delivering family planning services. Most trainers monitor the same providers they have trained, creating further bonds through a sense of continuity coupled with personal support to franchisees. These support visits are scheduled to take place once every six weeks – and earlier on demand – enabling the trainers to update Greenstar on the performance of the clinics. The trainers are constantly available by telephone, and respond promptly to calls for advice, assistance or supplies. A Quality Manual has been prepared to serve as a guideline for standards and norms for the providers to follow. A franchise agreement is signed on enrolment into the franchise network. *Greenstar* providers who have not been trained in IUD insertion or removal include the method in

counseling and refer clients either to external, tertiary health clinics, or to their female trained *Greenstar* members.

Results

As of March 2005, 3914 female doctors were trained in family planning counseling, IUD insertion and removal, hormonal methods, and infection prevention. Others trained in family planning counseling, hormonal methods, and IUD referral included 4801 males doctors, 2586 pharmacists, and more than 3000 female paramedics. Since its launch in 1995, more than 715,000 Multiload® IUDs have been sold. Between 2000 and 2004, annual sales grew nearly three-fold, reaching 166,000 in 2004 alone.