



**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 #7

Corporate Support for Frontline Health Workers

Lack of access to quality, affordable healthcare close to home is one of the major reasons 1.4 million children under five die of preventable causes and 56,000 pregnant women die of pregnancy related causes in India each year. Corporations can contribute significantly to reducing mortality by increasing access to frontline health workers. In so doing, corporations will not only save lives but will also gain deep knowledge and insights about these populations and learn how to innovate with products, market-based approaches and new types of partnerships.

Evidence suggests that a fully trained and equipped frontline health worker can reduce child mortality by more than 25 percent.

The Government of India supports a large network of frontline workers based in villages and urban slums to provide healthcare to women and children. They help to bridge the critical gap between vulnerable populations and the lowest level health facilities by supporting 850,000 Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), 2,000,000 Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and 45,000 Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs). In addition, the private sector plays a critical role with Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs), Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs), doctors and pharmacists treating large populations of women and children.

While AWWs focus on nutrition, the ASHAs' main tasks are to encourage pregnant women to seek antenatal care and deliver their babies in hospitals, to provide special care to babies born with low birth weight and to prevent and treat childhood diarrhea and pneumonia. While the Government of India's rapid development of the ASHA program is a significant achievement, challenges and gaps remain including:

**1. Training:** Increase the number of frontline health worker training institutions and outreach



programs, increase training on newborn danger signs, and provide more tools for continuous learning and refresher training.

**2. Supply Chain:** Strengthen supply chains so that frontline health workers have a continuous stock of the right supplies in their drug kits.

**3. Supervision and Payment:** Increase supervision of all frontline health workers through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and performance management and ensure timely payment.

**4. Regulation and Certification:** Expand quality assurance of private sector frontline health workers through certification and incentive programs.

### How Can a Corporation Help?

- **Infrastructure, Product Development & Service Delivery:** Build frontline delivery workforces to distribute health and related products and services to vulnerable communities and provide more cost-effective tools for frontline health workers

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5

50% of women in India deliver their babies without a skilled attendant



7

Frontline health workers can improve water, sanitation and hygiene practices

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#### Corporate Support for Frontline Health Workers

(e.g. digital training curricula, supervision and payment tools, diagnostic tools for pneumonia etc).

- **Advocacy, Awareness, Education and Behavior Change:** Fund campaigns that increase support for frontline health workers.
- **Innovation:** Provide funding and/or technical assistance to experiment with innovative approaches (e.g. private sector supply chain expertise for drug kits and other improvements, private sector supervisors and systems for government workers).



#### “MOBILE ACADEMY & MOBILE KUNJI”

is a private-private partnership that uses mobile phones, face-to-face training and mass media to 200,000 frontline health workers to reduce maternal and child mortality in the Indian State of Bihar. Health workers are offered a training course on ten life-saving health behaviors on their phones (Mobile Academy) and an on-demand advice service (Mobile Kunji). Television advertisements, radio programs, street theatre performances and “listening clubs” reinforce the health messages. Corporate partners include the leading telecommunications providers - Airtel, Vodafone, Idea, Reliance, Tata and BSNL. Other partners include BBC Media Action and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

#### “AROGYA PARIVAR”

is a corporate-led, for-profit social initiative that employs local women as ‘health educators’ and a network of sales supervisors to provide essential medicines and health services to 42 million people in 33,000 rural villages across ten states in India.

The program focuses on the leading causes of death and offers 80 pharmaceutical, generic and over-the-counter products as well as vaccines. Arogya Parivar began returning a profit within 30 months and since 2007 sales have increased 25-fold.

#### “SMS FOR LIFE”

is a public-private partnership that uses everyday technology to eliminate stockouts and improve access to essential medicines in sub-Saharan Africa. Health workers assess the stock levels of malaria medicines and send weekly text messages to district health authorities who then respond by distributing medicines to the health facilities that are running low. The program dramatically reduced stockouts in the pilot districts and eliminated them in one. Corporate partners include IBM, Vodafone, Vodacom, Google and Novartis. Other partners include Roll Back Malaria Partnership, Medicines for Malaria Venture, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Tanzanian Government.

### Examples of Corporate Support

Corporations are already investing in frontline health workers employing a variety of different models. The following are several of the leading, best practice examples of corporate engagement in this critical area:

#### “MANSI”

is a public-private partnership that trains frontline health workers – Sahiyas - to reduce maternal and newborn mortality in 174 villages in the Indian State of Jharkhand. Based on the home-based newborn care model pioneered by Drs Abhay and Rani Bang, MANSI trains local women to help new mothers deliver healthy newborns. Corporate partners include Tata Steel Rural Development Society. Other partners include the American India Foundation, SEARCH and the local government.

### 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 increase the impact of frontline health workers on preventing maternal and child deaths, please contact Rahul Bhargava at [rbhargava@mdghealthenvoy.org](mailto:rbhargava@mdghealthenvoy.org) or Pooja Bhatt at [pooja.bhatt@accenture.com](mailto:pooja.bhatt@accenture.com).



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