

Demand Generation-Innovation: Condom Depots

Background:

Promotion of family planning and ensuring access to preferred contraceptive methods for women and couples is essential to securing the well-being and good health of women.

Planning and spacing of births ensures sufficient birth interval and limiting of births when desired, by preventing unintended pregnancies that otherwise compel many women towards unsafe abortions or unwanted births that have an adverse impact on their health including nutritional well-being. Repeated closely spaced pregnancies and lactation period leads to reduction of maternal fat stores, depletion of micronutrients and increases the vulnerability of young mothers to lean body mass.

Increased urban population, rise in standard of living, high competitiveness and economic growth have led to increased vulnerabilities in communities, especially in informal urban settlements. Big families with more than 2 to 3 closely spaced children face challenges in providing a healthy living to their children.

One of SNEHA's programs has been working in a ward of Mumbai covering approximately 80,000 people. 85% of the population is Muslim, 10% is Hindu and 5% belong to other religions. A baseline survey conducted in April 2015 indicated that 26% women have an unmet need for family planning, which indirectly suggests that the need for family planning is very high. It was also found that the mean birth interval is 12 months and that there is a need to work on the spacing method of family planning.

Out of all the family planning methods for spacing – use of condoms is considered to be one of the safest, easily available, cost effective methods with almost negligible side effects. It not only helps prevent unwanted and unintended pregnancies but also promotes spacing between pregnancies and prevents reproductive illnesses.

Through our intervention we observed and learnt that many beneficiaries are not comfortable asking for condoms from government outreach staff or even SNEHA frontline workers. When SNEHA and health post staff are not available on weekends or public holidays, ensuring the availability of condoms in the community becomes a challenge. To ensure adequate availability and easy accessibility we implemented the concept of '**Condom Depot Holder**' which has been used extensively as a strategy mainly for HIV prevention in rural areas. Since condom depot holders are from the same area, community members feel comfortable and safe while asking for condoms. It develops trust and a good rapport between the depot holder and the community members.

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Steps / Processes:

1. Defining eligibility and selection process of condom depot holder

We did a quick discussion with few community leaders and tried to understand their idea of becoming depot holders and how they could help the community to access timely family planning services. This was followed by a selection process. Those members who were ready to contribute to this concept with the support of their family were initially chosen as depot holders. Since most of the depot holders were women, it became easier and convenient for the women in the community to procure condoms. We also had a married couple who were willing to hold the stock of condoms.

2. Defining roles and responsibilities

A depot holder

- Maintains a record of condoms distributed
- Converts a non-user to a user
- Ensures regular users are provided with need based condoms
- Generates awareness on the importance of using a condom
- Maintains adequate stock of condoms and replenishes the stock immediately
- Coordinates with health post outreach staff in case of shortages in supply

3. Capacity building of depot holders

- Quarterly trainings on different aspects of family planning methods
- Continuous hand holding
- Cross checking registers and providing support to improve
- Providing support for demonstrations
- Ensuring cross learning and interactions with other depot holders

4. Ensuring timely and appropriate supply to users

- Ensuring timely supply to users
- Ensuring taking stock from SNEHA initially and then from the PHN
- Regularly meeting municipal corporation health officials to ensure adequate condom stock

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A healthy world begins with a healthy woman

Challenges and Solutions:

- Adequate supply of condom from public health facilities: We continue to advocate for increase in supply of condoms from health posts.
- Busting myths and misconceptions about condoms like oil/lubrication of condoms leads to skin problems which result into major health problems: Providing continuous education to depot holders on addressing myths and misconceptions.

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