

SOCIETY FOR ACTION IN CREATIVE EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT (SACRED)

• Background

The penetration of sanitary napkins in rural India especially has been very low. Only 12% of total 355 million menstruating women in India use sanitary napkins. 75 percent of the women respondents were not psychologically prepared for menstruation. 68% of Indian rural women cannot afford sanitary napkins hence they ended up following unhygienic sanitary practices like cloths, sand and ash which made them vulnerable to infections and diseases. The scenario was severe in eastern parts of India where the percentage of non-affordability increased to 83%.

The case describes in detail how UNICEF and NGO SACRED worked for the improvement in rural livelihood by addressing Menstrual Hygiene Management in villages of Jalna district, Maharashtra. The Case talks about how the office of SACRED in Aurangabad developed a plan to distribute “Nirmal” sanitary napkins in the villages coming under the Bhokardan Taluka.



• Location, Date

Jalna, Maharashtra; 2012

• Areas

Rural

• Stage/Scale

Pilot Stage

• Objective of the assignment

To create awareness of their product and distribute the sanitary napkins to the Deepshikhas under this project

• What was done

- Deepshikha's were village women mostly in the age group of 15 to 25 years, some of whom were married, with no prior selling experience apart from creating awareness in the villages about menstrual hygiene. The Case showcases how they played a major role in a business model which not only included dealing with the customer at a very personal level and selling the sanitary napkins, but also included educating them about the usage of the same. The Case also talks about how a sanitary napkin production unit

was set up by the women self-help group (SHG) of Kedarkheda village to provide employment to the people in that area and a pilot project was launched to test the sustainability of the designed business model.

- The self-help group operating the production unit would also sell the sanitary napkins through commercial and institutional outlets.
- The Raw material would be sourced from Coimbatore from the existing supplier who procured material in bulk from US and Canada so as to serve more than 50 similar napkin manufacturing machines that had been installed all over the country.
- Muruganatham had created a sanitary napkin making machine that operates on a small scale. Contrary to a large-scale production model which requires INR 3.5 crore as initial investment, Muruganatham's sanitary napkin making machine could be made available to a buyer for approximately INR 75,000. This allowed smaller players like SACRED to adopt the business model of producing and selling sanitary napkin especially in the rural areas.



• Impact

- For Menstruating women “Nirmal” Brand is looked upon an affordable and quality Sanitary Napkin that was easily available in every village through the Deepshikhas because every woman had the right to maintain her hygiene.
- The napkins would be supplied to the BPL girls at a nominal cost of INR 1 per pack of six while the APL girls will have to pay INR 5 per pack.

• Challenges and Issues

- With no prior selling experience, apart from creating awareness in the villages about menstrual hygiene, they were now going to play a major role in a business model which included dealing with the customer and selling the sanitary napkin. Though this was a major concern, Mr. Jayant Deshpande thought about the effect that this project could have on the business model.
- In the past, the handmade sanitary napkins produced by similar self-help groups had critical quality issues like improper sealing at ends, uneven sized pads being produced and insufficient glue resulting in less adhesion which made the product inferior to product of the competitors both in terms of quality and price. Shockingly low level of awareness about menstrual hygiene amongst village women coupled with lack of prior personal selling experience of Deepshikhas was also a major cause of worry.

- **Innovation**

Most importantly, the pilot project banked on the quality of the sanitary napkins that were hand made by the women working in the Solapur sanitary napkin production unit. There was a collaboration between SACRED and UNICEF and because of that it was possible to distribute sanitary napkins to the needy at affordable costs.

- **Lessons learnt**

Mr. Jayant felt, making sanitary napkins available to village women through their own member of village (Deepshikha) was their USP (Unique Selling Point) for Nirmal Sanitary Napkins. The personalized selling would take care of efficient distribution of the sanitary napkins. Maximum reach to village women could be achieved. This would also be very helpful in imparting knowledge of self-sanitation to those women and could be achieved in line with the main motto of UNICEF.

- **Financials**

UNICEF would purchase the sanitary napkins at INR 19 per packet of 8 pads + transportation as per actual. A fixed price had been chosen for the selling cost instead of a price band to help monitoring and avoid confusion in the market for the particular brand that is going to be sold. That was decided to be INR 22 per packet of sanitary napkin. The Deepshikha would get commission from the sales which would be INR 2 per packet. The local NGO would receive INR 1 per packet for warehousing, stock keeping, accounting and reporting back to UNICEF. In case of selling a customer 50 packets or more at one time, the packets could be sold at the rate of INR 21.



- **Economic sustainability/Revenue Model**

The production unit would be set up by the women's self-help group of Kedarkheda village and would provide employment to people in the area. The local NGO would work as a depot from where the packets would be distributed to the Deepshikhas. Money collected after selling of the packets was to be deposited in the bank once every month by each Deepshikha.

Initially, 100 packets would be provided for each village. Based on the demand and sale, 50 additional packets would be further supplied to the Deepshikhas. The commission from the sales would go into the common pool and could not be claimed for a certain period of time decided upon by each Deepshikha. The Deepshikhas could give innovative or inexpensive methods to give update on sales.

- **Implementer Contact Persons**

- **Dr. L. J. Aherwadkar**
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• Sources and References

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdaqPmvIRg>
- <https://view.joomag.com/samvid-2nd-issue-june-2013/0381423001371194986?page=61>