

‘Bihar Caustic: Making a Difference’

The CSR team at Aditya Birla Chemicals (India) has been making relentless efforts for the upliftment of the community in Palamu, writes Dr. Pragnya Ram, Group Executive President - Corporate Communications & CSR



Communities living in this region of Jharkhand have no great affinity for strangers. A long history of exploitation by 'outsiders' has made them wary and untrustworthy of any face. But this expression becomes a thing of the past, as their guard drops and reticence gives way to a warm welcome, when a particular group of outsiders — ABCIL Jan Seva Trust Team, comes visiting.

The ABCIL Jan Seva Trust was established in 2000. Undeterred by the challenges presented, the trust led by Mr. S.S. Gupta, Mrs. Asha Gupta, Mr. Shatrughan Singh, Mr. Ajit Sharma, Mr. Rakesh Tiwari, Dr. R.N. Singh and Mr. Babban Ram has been putting in relentless efforts for the upliftment of the community in Palamu. They work in five priority areas of education and capacity building, health and family welfare, economic self-reliance and watershed development, infrastructure development and social reforms.

Besides our initiatives in the five focused areas, a greater need was felt to address the issue of family welfare as a priority thrust in the region, so that the impact of other initiatives can be lasting and truly beneficial. With this assessment, we embarked upon our journey to address a long cherished need of family welfare in the adjoining community. We have been contributing to the National Family Welfare Programme through effective and efficient strategies that inspire people's choice for reproductive healthcare and a small family norm.

Our main objectives include

- To provide need based reproductive health services to the rural community
- To improve the quality of life by providing community health care
- Motivating target groups to adopt small family norms
- To ensure sustainability of the project by community participation
- To reduce the maternal mortality and infant mortality rate
- Care and cure of sexually transmitted diseases
- AIDS awareness

To achieve these objectives in the circumstances Garhwa District presented before us, looked like an insurmountable challenge.

As per the 2001 census, Jharkhand has a total population of 26.9 million with an annual growth rate of 23.2 per cent and an even higher rate of 29 per cent in the Garhwa district.

The estimates provided by the sample registration system (SRS) show the crude birth rate (CBR) at 26.3 per 1000 population. And more than half the births in the state are higher order births (three or more) and a quarter of the women have birth intervals of less than 24 months.



Only a quarter of the currently married women in Jharkhand use any modern method of contraception. About 38 per cent of those currently married are using any modern method of contraception compared with 22 per cent rural women. The proportion of pregnant women receiving antenatal checkups in Jharkhand is quite low, as only nine out of 10 women get just one antenatal check-up. Awareness of HIV/AIDS in the state is low, wherein about 85 per cent of women have not heard about HIV/AIDS.

To compound the problems, the literacy rate is as low as 29 per cent with a shocking 13 per cent in women. As a result, a majority of the people hold misconceptions and superstitions about family welfare planning. Limited resources, and lack of adequate medical facilities to meet the basic health needs of life have created a financial crunch and extremist problem in this area.

We had to, therefore, inch our way slowly, steadily and sensitively. We mooted a plan based on linkages with government agencies and tried to rope in local people.

To usher in the change, our strategy banked on awareness and contact drives to motivate the people, encouraging women and youth participation in projects and decision making processes. This ensured proper mobilisation of various available resources and doing the much needed counselling of clients on reproductive health and organising health checkup camps in remote areas.

Here is what our ABCIL Trust team has achieved in just a span of six years.

We have established five family welfare centres (FWC) including four sub-centres for conducting health and family welfare programmes on a regular basis. We have conducted 96 family welfare camps and 25 AIDS awareness camps so far. The family welfare camps are organised every month at each cluster level, and four to six AIDS awareness camps are organised on a yearly basis.



Regular checkups and treatment is provided for RTIs and STD cases. 1578 patients suffering from RTIs and 674 patients suffering from STDs have benefitted. For antenatal and postnatal checkups and treatment, camps are organised every thursday at FWC; 14,435 women have benefitted so far. Immunisation camps are also organised every thursday at FWC; the total number of beneficiaries has been 12620.

Camps for contraceptive use and condom distribution are organised every week at the family welfare centre. These camps have substantially increased the number of contraceptive users to 21790, with 825 of them as regular users and 18 per cent as irregular users. Family planning operations have been conducted; a total of 3235 people have benefitted, out of which 1030 are from minority communities.

Other general health camps are organised on a regular basis where the number of beneficiaries has gone up from 1762 in 2001-02 to 13,262 in 2005-06 making a total of 42,049 so far. Some other camps like a dental camp has benefitted 1,052 people so far, eye operation camps have improved the lives of 1,085 people in the region. The impact of our initiatives is evident from the following indicators:

- Maternal and infant mortality rate has reduced from 8.6 to 5.2 per thousand.
- Coverage of antenatal checkup has gone up from 18 per cent to 85 per cent
- All children from the 0-5 years age group, have been immunised against DPT, BCG, measles, polio and VIT-A
- Birth rate reduced from 4.90 to 2.10 per thousand
- RTI / STD cases have been successfully treated and cured
- Rate for use of condom, oral pills, and CU-T could be enhanced from 20 per cent to 80 per cent
- All 3,235 cases of sterilisation have been successful
- More than 75 per cent deliveries have been conducted by trained birth attendants
- 1,030 muslim women came forward for sterilisation constituting 31per cent of total sterilisation made



Way forward ABCIL's work to support people and communities is part and parcel of the company's business. The company is proud of what it has achieved through its people and is committed to continually improving its programme of

any development activity it undertakes. Some of the future targets we strive to achieve for one of our major initiatives for family welfare include:

- Emphasis on 1,419 target couples as found out after the survey analysis, to be covered for family planning operation in the current year (2006-07)
- Increased emphasis on the social mobilisation activities
- Mobilisation of the funds available with the government and other NGOs and successfully partner with them to strengthen our programme
- Enlarging the capacity of family welfare committees (from 29 to 40) and empowering it to sustain the project
- Construction of a 30-bed referral hospital proposed jointly by ABCIL Jan Seva Trust and Health Department. All infrastructural and recurring cost will be borne by the government

And the journey continues to provide the blueprint and the means that can enable the rural poor to be masters of their own destiny.