Making Preventative Care Accessible

Arogya World is focused on addressing diabetes in Saligram’s country of origin, India, where the prevalence of diabetes increased tenfold between 1971 and 2000. With half a billion people under the age of 25, India is a powerhouse of future consumers and workers. Most of this group is healthy now, but if they become sick the economic cost will be significant.

Arogya World recognized that—in order to prevent this from becoming the case—young people must learn how to prevent disease while still healthy. With approximately 900 million cell phone users throughout India, many of whom are under the age of 25, mobile technology presented one of the best strategies for moving the needle on this issue. But this project would need a platform that could help it reach its full potential. For Arogya World, that platform was CGI.

FINDING THE RIGHT PLATFORM LEADS TO SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS AND STRONG RESULTS

In many ways, Arogya World’s first Commitment to Action—“Diabetes Prevention with mHealth in India”—was also its first major project as an organization. Having already begun conversations with Nokia to be the mobile partner for the project, Saligram’s familiarity with CGI led her to apply for membership, which she felt would help accelerate and increase the impact of her work. In June of 2011, Arogya World was accepted as a CGI member, and the mDiabetes project became its first commitment.

Arogya World worked to finalize its commitment proposal in time to be launched at CGI’s 2011 Annual Meeting, which brought global attention to the organization’s efforts. With the support of its CGI affiliation, it was able to secure a powerful network of partners, including Nokia, Emory University, Johnson & Johnson (LifeScan Inc.), Aetna International, and many others.

Chronic Diseases: A Global Challenge

Non-communicable diseases include diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, chronic lung diseases, and cancer. They are responsible for two out of three deaths today, 80 percent of which occur in developing countries. However, the World Health Organization (WHO) maintains that many NCDs can be prevented by eating a healthy diet, increasing physical activity, and avoiding tobacco use.

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It’s important to note that in order for a message to be received, the consumer had to opt in to receive the messages. This is why the response rate is lower compared to a control group.

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This commitment is truly a partnership between a civil society organization, the private sector, and knowledgeable partners to create a culture of workplace wellness,” Saligram explained. “If the culture changes, it will lead to health changes. This is pioneering work in India.”

“Girls and Women as Part of the Solution

Saligram believes that girls and women are a major part of the solution to the NCD crisis. They are often the caregivers for their families, and they make decisions about food and activity level that can directly impact NCD prevalence. Through Saligram’s involvement with CGI’s Girls and Women Track and the NCD Action Network—and with the support of CGI staff to determine the measurable parameters of the project—Arogya World decided to make a third commitment: “10,000 Women’s Voices Help the Fight Against NCDs.”

Launched at CGI’s 2013 Annual Meeting, this commitment aims to implement a quantitative survey of 10,000 women in 15 countries to gather women’s perspectives on NCDs. Arogya World brought in Novartis, Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease, American Cancer Society, UNICEF, Population Services International, Abt SRBI, and Jana to partner on the project, and CGI staff continue to assist with securing additional partners and finding ways to draw world attention to the issue.

The final commitment results will be shared with the United Nations and used to establish NCDs as a women’s issue and as a family issue, putting a human face on the NCD crisis.

Previous research shows that women’s involvement in NCDs is critical to reducing the disease burden. Saligram believes that focusing on girls and women is essential to making progress in the NCD space.

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