



SUCCESS STORY

USAID Promotes Health Products in Rural India

USAID is using *e-Choupal*, a rural distribution and communication network, to increase access to and build demand for health products and services among rural populations

India's growing population of more than one billion strains resources and complicates disease prevention. Maternal and child mortality rates remain high, with approximately 1.9 million children dying before their fifth birthday and 67,000 mothers dying every year because of pregnancy-related complications. Family planning choices are limited: more than two-thirds of women opt for sterilization as their method for family planning and 30 million couples have an unmet need for contraception.

USAID's Market-based Partnerships (MBP) for Health Project has partnered with the Indian company, ITC Limited to leverage its rural distribution and communication network, *e-Choupal*, to increase access to and build demand for health products and services among rural

populations. The primary goal of MBP's *e-Choupal* health model is to increase access to family planning, diarrhea management, water purification, and menstrual hygiene products along with general use, over the counter medicines and products in remote villages of the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Under *e-Choupal*, MBP has created a new mechanism – Village Health Champions (VHCs) – for promoting and selling health products. For a commission, VHCs supply rural communities with selected health products from private sector and pharmaceutical partners via ITC. The VHCs are given intensive training on public health issues, as well as training in business practices, sales, and inventory management. VHCs also serve as community-based public health entrepreneurs, creating awareness of priority health issues and linking the community with key

public sector health programs.

About 80 Village Health Champions were selected and trained on key health issues and the program has already been successfully launched in one district of Uttar Pradesh. USAID has agreements with some of India's leading health product companies in all of the target health areas. The program has directly reached almost 5,000 women. In 2010, the initiative supported more than 315,000 counseling visits on family planning or reproductive health issues.



A community worker providing information on sanitary napkins to rural women. Photo: USAID/MBP