

Biocon Foundation – Social impact through sustainable community development

22 October 2013 | Features | By BioSpectrum Bureau

Biocon Foundation – Social impact through sustainable community development



As an emerging global biopharmaceutical enterprise focused on delivering affordable healthcare, Biocon's commitment goes beyond developing new medicines. Biocon is engaged in providing sustainable solutions to address the myriad healthcare challenges faced by the country as a part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Biocon's Foundation believes that the corporate social responsibility will be best fulfilled by creating a comprehensive and integrated ecosystem which can deliver affordable and effective healthcare to the less privileged among India's rural and urban population. It supports education initiatives imparting better learning to the underprivileged students in rural schools.

It is also constantly engaged in empowering communities through sustainable solutions and have facilitated for better infrastructure including health-centers, community centers, primary schools, proper sanitation, water and light sources in various districts of rural Karnataka.

The Foundation believes in making a meaningful social impact through collaborative approach and is constantly engaged in several public-private partnerships to implement integrated programs aimed at making a difference.

Biocon's comprehensive healthcare efforts span preventive, primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare programs. Under its preventive health education programs, Biocon realized that preventing and managing chronic disease would be challenging. Patients must often change their lifestyle and behavior.

Thus, the Foundation has fused elements of education and prevention by implementing an extensive preventive health education programs. This addresses water-borne diseases, hygiene-related and chronic illnesses, as well as maternal health and childcare.

To raise awareness about hygiene and sanitation related illnesses, which account for a significant number of patient complaints in rural areas, Biocon's Community Health Workers (CHWs) conduct preventive health workshops to educate villagers on nutrition, personal and environmental hygiene, good sanitation and hand washing habits.

The workshops have been attended by almost 200,000 women and children so far.

Biocon Foundation has also taken the initiative to build over 800 toilets in Karnataka to not only ensure better health for all community members but also the safety and privacy of women and children.

Oral cancer still remains as one of the most debilitating and disfiguring of all malignancies. As part of its CSR commitment, Biocon has embarked on an innovative program that leverages technology for the early detection of oral cancer through mobile phone screening and education. This is a collaborative program with the state government and ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers.

The oral cancer screening program conducted by the Foundation in high risk groups in three pilot villages in FY13 covered over 5,000 people. Of these, over 300 individuals were detected with positive lesions, who were then taken to the nearest diagnostic center for a biopsy.

The program has led to early intervention and potential cancer cure. It also aims to drive the cessation of tobacco products usage, which is the root cause of oral cancers.

Biocon Foundation has also rolled out a comprehensive cervical cancer screening and treatment program in collaboration with the Mazumdar Shaw Cancer Centre (MSCC). The program aims to target a substantial percentage of women in the High Risk Group (sexually active women in the age group of 30-49 years) in our field practice areas.

Malnutrition, in children, is another area that is addressed by Biocon Foundation. A government survey in the Bagalkot district of North Karnataka had identified that over 3,000 children under the age of five were malnourished. In partnership with the Bagalkot local administration, Biocon Foundation rolled out a program to address this issue.

The Foundation has about 9 Arogya Raksha clinics operating in various districts of rural Karnataka, offering clinical services to the communities around them.

These services ensure that the rural poor have access to efficient health management via competent clinical care, disbursement of affordable generic medicines and simple cost effective diagnostic tests. As many as 75,000 patients benefited from these clinical services in FY13.

Biocon's CSR wing also continues to encourage communities to protect themselves against catastrophic illness by enrolling with Arogya Raksha Yojana, a micro health insurance scheme, with very low premiums.

The insurance scheme offers its members access to highly qualified doctors and surgeons who enable expensive surgeries for cardiac and gynecology procedures in the best of hospitals almost free of cost.

Since education holds the key to progress, the Biocon Foundation has made concentrated efforts to empower rural Indian youth. Aiming to provide computer-aided learning, extracurricular activities, life skills education, and English language skills for rural children, the Foundation has spearheaded several education programs such as Chinnara Ganitha, which seeks to strengthen the learning of basic mathematical concepts; Aata Paata Wadi, an after-school resource center for children from local government schools; Kelsa+, an initiative that tries to inexpensively reach out to low-income staff in Biocon's campuses.

The Chinnara Ganitha program has generated data that indicates that children have significantly benefited from these books. Their computational skills are way above those who have not had access to these books. From 11,000 Chinnara Ganitha maths work books in 2006, it now prints over 100,000 books.

The Foundation also provides support for infrastructure in some villages like community centers, primary health clinics, proper sanitation, safe drinking water, and rain water harvesting facilities.

More importantly, Biocon has built a new village to resettle villagers of Mangalgudda in North Karnataka, which was washed

away in floods a few years ago.

The Foundation's efforts were directed at constructing over 400 new houses equipped with toilets and solar lights for each house. A primary healthcare center and a school was also set up to make the village self-sustained. The houses were handed over to the government and are now being allotted to the villagers.

Being socially responsible is a pre-requisite for being sustainable. As a result, Biocon today integrates CSR thinking into every aspect of its business and is always looking for ways to create economic value, and at the same time address society's needs and challenges.

Biocon Foundation through its various initiatives aims at social and economic inclusion by ensuring that marginalized communities have equal access to healthcare services and educational opportunities.