

Healthy Household Initiative

Health need

Acute respiratory infection, diarrheal disease, and malaria are the leading infectious disease killers of children under the age of five in the developing world and result in 2.5 million preventable deaths each year. Shelter is necessary but not sufficient for combating these illnesses. To survive, families need protection from these life-threatening infectious diseases that strike at the household level. At the same time, many products designed to improve the health of low-income families can also have a positive impact on the lives of women, who spend a lot of time gathering fuel for fires and caring for sick children. The same products can positively impact the environment by working to reduce indoor air pollution.

Technology solution

As a solution, PATH developed the concept of a Healthy Household Initiative (HHI), which promotes the use of latrines, water filters, clean cookstoves, solar lanterns, and bed nets. The success of the HHI relies on strong partnerships with distribution channel entrepreneurs and microfinance institutions (MFIs) that enable poor households to buy these health products using consumer loans. Through this mechanism families overcome the up-front cost barrier for durable goods and local distribution entrepreneurs receive technical assistance to develop essential business skills. Access to these household products can improve health outcomes, reduce women's workload, and reduce indoor air pollution. We work with local social entrepreneurs to identify quality products that are made affordable through consumer loans, catalyzing a market for health products where options are otherwise limited.

Current status and results

We validated this market-based approach for sales of water filters and latrines through MFIs in India and Cambodia. With appropriate products and marketing, we achieved high levels of adoption and sustained use. We learned how direct sales to groups of women can aggregate demand and make it more efficient for product manufacturers to extend their reach into underserved communities. Our private-sector partners are already scaling up this model without donor support. To build on this success, in 2014 PATH worked with Sakhi Unique Rural Enterprise and Sakhi Samudaya Kosh in Maharashtra, India, to test a bundled offer. Consumers were offered loans for two or more HHI products.

We have also developed the Commercialization Toolkit to help additional small- to medium-sized entrepreneurs replicate the approach. The toolkit supports the development of social enterprises, new jobs, and healthier homes.



Products promoted
by PATH's Healthy
Household Initiative.

“An integrated approach with stoves, lamps, latrines, water filters, and bed nets is a very exciting idea... addressing multiple health risk factors simultaneously is more likely to achieve a health benefit [and] the opportunity to leverage a single channel for multiple interventions is certainly a much more cost-effective way to help households than demanding separate channels for each intervention.”

Personal communication. Jacob E. Moss, Director, US Cookstoves Initiatives, Office of the Secretary of State, Global Partnership Initiative

Availability

For more information regarding this project, contact Lorelei Goodyear at lgoodyear@path.org.

Donor support

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