

Private sector in management of public health diseases

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The private sector can play an important role in management of public health diseases.

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A significant burden of HIV, TB and malaria, the so called public health diseases continues to lie within the low and middle income countries. Resources for the control of such diseases are largely being made available through the public sector be it the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP) or the National Vector Borne Disease Control Program (NVBDCP). The private sector continues to focus on the management of non-communicable diseases as this seems to offer a better return on investment. However, the changing face of health care poses new challenges for the detection, treatment, and prevention of infectious diseases especially in view of the already overwhelmed public sector which has to deal with the burden of both communicable and non-communicable diseases. The limited resources within the public health system leave it ill equipped to deal with the increasing threat of existing and emerging infectious diseases.

Despite this disparity, there is now an increasing focus on the engagement of private sector in management of public health

diseases. This is happening through a variety of interface arrangements aimed at leveraging the expertise of both the public and private sector in effective management of public health disease burden. There are numerous examples where the governments are engaged with the private sector to create successful partnerships. Some successful partnerships include Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), Roll Back Malaria (RBM), Stop TB partnership (Stop TB), Safe Injections Global Network (SIGN), Global Polio Eradication Programme, Action TB, International Aids Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), Global Alliance for TB Drug Development (GATBDD) etc. Agencies like Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative have been able to significantly increase access to both drugs and diagnostics including CD4 monitoring through 3 way partnerships with country programs and private sector entities such as BD. Likewise another NGO, Foundation for Innovation New Diagnostics (FIND), has been able to develop successful partnerships with the private sector and the WHO for the introduction of advanced TB diagnostic technologies including liquid culture systems in low and middle income countries.

NACO too is trying to streamline the provision of ART services by various NGO/Trust/Charitable/PSU/corporate hospitals through a MoU approved by the Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice and the National AIDS Control Board. NACO is partnering with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for implementation of this initiative in the corporate sector. CII and NACO are collaborating with the private sector on introduction of HIV related work place policies, voluntary counseling and testing centers and now even ART centres. Some corporates covered under this initiative include BILT, Godrej, Bajaj and ACC. Under this arrangement, the corporate entity provisions for the infrastructure and human resource whereas NACO provides training, ARV drugs, HIV and CD4 reagent kits at discounted pricing creating a win-win situation for both parties.

Likewise Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria (GBC) is a coalition of more than 220 companies united to keep the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria a global priority. The Coalition's members share learnings from the front lines of the fight, and GBC provides support so that companies can take an active role in defeating the pandemics. In addition to the above, medical technological companies like BD and a few others are engaged in capacity building through delivery of advanced training programs focused on researchers, clinicians and healthcare workers.

Global health agendas are today being increasingly shaped by the private sector. The resources in the commercial sector make it an irresistible partner for synergistic public health initiatives. Governments can benefit from these resources to fulfill their mandate whereas the private sector can not only play an important role in the national health agenda but also meet its social responsibility goals. Successful partnerships in the development and health sectors have clearly highlighted the need to harness the potential in collaborating with the private sector to manage and achieve public health goals. The roles, motivations, and operations of public and private sector health care organizations can be intentionally and purposefully aligned toward achieving common health goals. Though health care organizations in public and private sectors respond to different pressures but they clearly have an interest in engaging in efforts aligned with the principles of universal access to health.

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