"Y.C." IUDs for India

India
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Budget: $<1,000
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**Communications**
- Health education
- Infant health
- Maternal health
- Education
- Reproductive health
- Women's issues

**Project Summary**

**Elevator Pitch**

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

This project aims to improve the health of women and infants through increased awareness and uptake of the hormonal IUD. Hormonal IUDs, which are recommended by the WHO, would have benefits for women such as reduced anemia, increased educational and employment opportunities, better sanitation, and greater control over timing and spacing of births. Reducing anemia in reproductive-age women will also lead to better birth outcomes, including reduced risk of preterm birth and better immune function and developments in neonates. Because IUDs must be inserted in clinics, this also provides an entry point for counseling and testing for other health issues, including other family planning methods and STIs. To advance these goals, this project will build capacity of health clinics and community networks to promote and market the hormonal IUD.

Benefits of IUDs

There are several reasons why this method of contraception would be beneficial for young Indian women. According to the 2006 National Family Health Survey (NFHS) report, the vast majority of Indians do not use modern methods of birth control until the desired number of children is achieved. The most common method is female sterilization. Delaying first births and spacing subsequent births is important to the health of both mother and child, especially with the young age of marriage. Delay of initial childbearing after marriage would increase educational and employment opportunities for women. This time also allows for further maturation of girls who are married in their teens, which decreases risk to both mother and baby during pregnancy and birth.

Out of the 3 spacing methods currently promoted by the Indian government (oral contraceptives, condoms, and IUDs), the hormonal IUD is the most effective, longest lasting, and easiest to use, since it only requires 3 medical visits during 5 years of use. As a long-term method, the IUD is also highly cost-effective for both patients and the medical system. These characteristics make IUDs the most commonly used reversible contraception method worldwide.

Hormonal IUDs have other non-contraceptive benefits. In 90% of women, hormonal IUDs reduce the amount of blood lost in menstruation; for about 20% menstruation ceases altogether. Menstruation is a major cause of anemia in women of reproductive age. Women that are anemic before pregnancy are usually anemic during pregnancy, which can lead to postpartum hemorrhage and other complications. Additional benefits included possible reduced risk of endometrial hyperplasia, endometrial cancer, and pelvic inflammatory disease, which can all cause infertility.

Current Status of IUDs in India

According to the 2006 NFHS, 68.8% of Indian women have knowledge of IUDs, compared to 85% for oral contraceptives and 96.6% for female sterilization; furthermore, only 51% of men have knowledge of IUDs. Only 0.4% of married 15-19 year olds have ever used an IUD, compared to 1.1% who have been sterilized. IUD use is 3.6% among married 20-24 year olds. The IUD is the least known and least used method of the 3 spacing methods available, and it is also the only of these methods that is not socially marketed.

My project

While pills and condoms are socially marketed for birth spacing and limiting, their usage rates are also low -- 11.1% and 13.9%, respectively. To improve community attitudes about IUDs, I propose to market them not solely on their benefits as contraception, but as a method of improving preconception or intraconception health. First, project staff will identify women who have had IUDs to learn from their experiences. Project staff will then hold focus groups with young women to determine the acceptability of amenorrhea, which previous studies in India suggest is culturally acceptable. We will also have focus groups of men and older women, possibly members of the local panchayats, who are influential in family planning decisions, to determine the effectiveness of the message that hormonal IUDs should be used to improve birth outcomes for both mother and child in the future.

The project will use information from the focus groups to develop a social marketing plan to promote awareness and uptake of IUDs. The plan will include recommendations on how best to transmit messages, including through informal networks and peer to peer education. Engaging peers in education is a highly effective and sustainable practice for health programs. To ensure this method is successful, project staff will provide a train-the-trainer session for the peer education coordinator in our project area.
Project staff will also meet with health professionals responsible for inserting IUDs to ensure they are providing adequate family planning counseling, including both the positive and negative side effects of hormonal IUDs, since these are the most common reason for IUD discontinuation. Also, testing facilities for STIs will be evaluated and a risk assessment algorithm, based on the USAID model, will be recommended if facilities are inadequate. Since many young women are illiterate, we will assess the availability of visual aids used in education and counseling on IUDs and create materials if needed.

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**About Project**

**Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?**

India has the most maternal deaths in the world. Some contributing factors include high rates of anemia, young maternal age at first birth, and low use of contraception, especially for birth spacing. Hormonal IUDs address all of these issues, and also decrease chances of infertility in the future.

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**About You**

**Organization:**
UNC Campus Health Services

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**First Name**
Laura

**Last Name**
Glish

**Website**
Organization
UNC Campus Health Services

**Country**
, NC

Are you an individual between the ages of 18 and 35 who would like to apply for a nine month Young Champions Program mentored by an Ashoka Fellow?

Yes

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**About Your Organization**

**Organization Name**
UNC Campus Health Services

**Organization Phone**
919-966-3658

**Organization Address**
320 Emergency Room Dr, Chapel Hill

**Organization Country**
, NC

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The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen.

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**Your idea**

**Country your work focuses on**

**Website URL**

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**Innovation**

**What makes your idea unique?**

This project is innovative not only because IUDs are not currently marketed, but because it focuses on the positive side effects as improving future birth outcomes, not preventing births. With young married women, the cultural expectation of childbearing is strong, and only 26% of married women make their health decisions mainly on their own, with young wives having even less autonomy. Therefore, by targeting not only the women themselves but also their husbands and mother-in-laws with messages about improved reproductive health, it will change the way the community feels about contraception. In addition, since IUDs must be inserted by a health professional, when women come in for consultations it will also give them access to counseling about other family planning methods and women's health issues. Finally, by supporting peer education networks and training NGO staff, this project will strengthen the community's capacity for health promotion and family planning efforts.
Do you have a patent for this idea?

Impact

What impact have you had?

The impact of this project, if launched, would be small at first. However, social marketing using mass media could have a wide impact on the awareness and uptake of IUDs in India. The more popular a method becomes, the more likely women are to adopt it.

Actions

This project will require stakeholder engagement and community buy-in, not only from women of reproductive age but also from men and elders. It will also require skilled medical staff to insert the IUDs, and a reliable supply of hormonal IUDs.

Results

Identifying key stakeholders and garnering their support will not only create community buy-in but also help inform messages around IUD promotion. A trained staff and supply of IUDs will ensure that IUDs are available when requested.

What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Please address each year separately, if possible.

Year One: Community buy-in and support, peer health educators willing to address these issues, effective marketing messages, cooperation from key partners such as public clinics, the Family Planning Association of India, IUD companies

Year Two: consistent supply of IUDs, retention of peer health educators

Year Three: funding for scale-up of social marketing campaign

What would prevent your project from being a success?

Cultural factors and traditions surrounding timing of first pregnancy and monthly menstruation could prevent uptake of hormonal IUDs. Addressing these issues is important in designing social marketing messages.

How many people will your project serve annually?

1001-10,000

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?

Less than $50

Does your project seek to have an impact on public policy?

Sustainability

What stage is your project in?

Idea phase

Is your initiative connected to an established organization?

If yes, provide organization name.

How long has this organization been operating?

Please select

Does your organization have a Board of Directors or an Advisory Board?

Does your organization have a non-monetary partnerships with NGOs?

Does your organization have a non-monetary partnerships with businesses?

Does your organization have a non-monetary partnerships with government?

Please tell us more about how these partnerships are critical to the success of your innovation.

If this project were launched, it would be key to partner with the government clinics, local health NGOs, and IUD companies to have the capacity and supplies to complete the project.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization?

1. Identify pilot project site, with the capacity to insert IUDs
2. Establish partnerships with local clinics and NGOs; Engage key stakeholders and create community support
3. Work with IUD manufacturers to obtain hormonal IUDs

The Story

What was the defining moment that you led to this innovation?

I am a big proponent of IUDs. I was looking at DHS data for India and struck by how few women are using IUDs. I have worked in India and am aware of the many cultural factors that influence the lack of contraception uptake. I connected the dots that the beneficial side effects of hormonal IUDs would be more desirable than the contraceptive effect.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.

I am a recent graduate of the Gillings School of Global Public Health from the Maternal and Child Health Department. I am passionate about
reproductive health and women's empowerment and in international family planning in particular.

**How did you first hear about Changemakers?**

Through another organization or company

**If through another, please provide the name of the organization or company**

Maternal Health Task Force

**Source URL:** https://www.changemakers.com/maternalhealth/entries/yc-iuds-india