

# Effectiveness of PR Campaigns as a Major Tool of Creating Awareness about Health Issues among Tribal Population of Rajasthan: A Critical Overview

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## **Abstract**

Indian Tribal Population has always been the worst victim of all kinds of health issues and problems. No matter whether it is due to their ignorance, illiteracy or the fact of residing in remote rural areas creating distance from availing the medical facilities or the fact of them suffering from financial crunch. A number of projects have been initiated either by the government or through Public Private Partnerships for the upliftment of tribal population and to educate them regarding health matters and issues. Although there has been noticeable improvement in the upliftment of their status as well as sex ratio but still there are certain areas like infant mortality rate, neo-natal mortality rate, maternal mortality which needs attention and some concrete deliberations.

No doubt in the present scenario where the tribal population is facing so many problems and challenges in every day life, the significance of timely and consistent communication as well as organizing activities or events on a regular basis can play an effective role in the direction of creating awareness about health issues and problems amongst the tribal communities who are otherwise illiterate and normally detached from the developments taking place in the outside world.

The paper is an Informative Review Paper and makes an in depth study of few relevant cases which demonstrate the significance of PR Campaigns as an effective tool for dissemination of health related information amongst the tribal of Rajasthan thus acting as an exemplary Health Communication Tool. The paper through the help of case studies tries to analyze the impact of these campaigns and how fruitful they have been in the field of emancipation of tribal population and providing them an outlet towards leading a much more better, healthier and safer life.

**Keywords:** *Tribal, Population, Awareness, Upliftment, Health Matters, PR Campaigns, Health Education*

## Introduction

Tribal Population have for a long period of time been the victims of maximum injustices, inequality and illiteracy which has finally lead to their oppression and exploitation in all possible ways for decades resulting in them leading an underdeveloped lifestyle which seems to be far different from the common masses. When we talk of the array of vast difference between the tribal and non-tribal communities in all possible areas and all possible aspects, we find the health area to be not an exception. The tribal population are most affected by all kinds of health problems and disorders and are highly prone to health hazards leading to untimely diseases or death. The reasons can be innumerable, however the prime one appears to be their ignorance about the health issues as well as lack of knowledge on the latest developments in medical science and the treatments available. Spreading awareness and being informed seems to be the biggest need of the hour and the only solution to all kinds of medical and health problems and issues faced by the tribal communities.

Various Government Departments and private bodies related to health sector has therefore time and again taken the help of campaign as one of the strongest and most effective tool to create awareness and to educate the tribals about the different spectrums of health issues and health problems and the remedies available to tackle them.

According to some of the major issues related to scheduled tribes are social injustices and atrocities, displacement of tribals, lack of harmony in implementation of laws and policies due to large projects like dams, mines and urbanization in tribal areas, need for capacity building in administration, convergence of regulatory and development programmes and their timely implementation, lack of a proper national tribal policy laying down the formation of a strong and clear path of tribal development.

A number of measures needs to be undertaken to make the tribal population health conscious, whether they may be making the health care services reach out to them or giving rise to community involvement in every new initiative related to health care development of tribes or whether its bringing a change in the approach and working style of the health care service providers.

## State of Tribal Population in Rajasthan

Its quite surprising that major section of the geographic area of Rajasthan comprises of tribal population. Almost 12.4% of the entire population of the state belongs to Scheduled Tribes. Five districts namely, Udaipur, Banswara, Dungarpur, Jaipur and Sawai Madhopur together contributed two-third of the state's tribal population. In spite of the fact that tribal communities comprise a major chunk of Rajasthan's population but still they face a number of acute problems, chiefly illiteracy and the lack of awareness about health problems and their eradication measures. It's a matter of serious concern that the literacy rate among the tribals of Rajasthan is very poor. Low literacy rate and lack of education and awareness is a driving factor behind high infant and child mortality rate amongst the tribals in Rajasthan. Some of the most common health problems resulting in high child and infant mortality numbers are acute respiratory infections, diarrhea and anaemia. Tribals are mostly known to adopt different patterns of diagnosis and treatments to treat all kinds of illness and diseases on account of lack of awareness and knowledge about health matters and issues and as a result of this gross ignorance, high number of death cases among the tribal communities have become a routine affair. Intense belief on supernatural powers has also been a major factor influencing the price of treatment of diseases among the tribals creating an intense requirement for spreading waves of education and knowledge regarding health, hygiene and diseases amongst them. Under these prevailing circumstances of alarming number of health

problems and issues, the role and effectiveness of PR Campaigns from the side of health organizations and health ministries cannot be under estimated. According to World Bank Feature Story (2012), “Young tribal girls enter the reproductive age as victims of undernourishment and anaemia and face greater health risks as a result of early marriage, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

### **PR Campaigns and Health Awareness**

Public Health Awareness Programmes, specially Education and Communication Campaigns have always played a crucial role in educating the tribal masses about each and every aspect of health care. However still there is a need to have more well planned campaigns with more interesting and appealing messages to create an influential and long term impact on their cognitive as well as awareness level.

Rajasthan has innumerable instances where traditional folk media and live performances have been used for the dissemination of educational and informative messages to create a long lasting impact on the perception and opinion of tribes. As a part of CSR effort many organizations and their PR or Corporate Communication Department and mostly Government Organizations and Ministries plan out various projects and campaigns to provide awareness about the various health issues and problems amongst the tribal population who are in great need of it because of their social and economic backwardness.

Various Health Awareness Campaigns planned and implemented by the state government PR Officers in the rural areas play a significant role bridging the gap between government organization and its health policies and the illiterate tribal population and creating awareness among them. People suffering from critical diseases like cancer, AIDS, Hypertension have various symptoms and disorder and suffer from a lot of depression. Such cases require a lot of counseling and dissemination of timely and accurate information and guidance which would not only keep the aggrieved well informed but would also serve as a means helping them to fight with such disorders in a more confident manner. Tribals due to their poor socio-economic condition suffer from a lot of problems and are always detached from the mainstream population. Lack of awareness and proper education regarding health protection and cure adds to the plight of the tribals multifold. Besides this various other factors like poor transportation, the fact of being detached from the cities, leading to unavailability of medical functions and above all the financial crunch have also been the reasons behind their vulnerability towards major and critical health problems and disorders in comparison to the other section of population..

Three World Bank supported projects in the direction of State Health Systems Project in the states of Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have been examples of initiatives to introduce innovative strategies to improve the health conditions of tribals in these states which have a significant percentage of tribal population. The projects have been based on Public Private Partnership (PPP) Contracts.

According to Long, K.H.(2006), “Women health issue branding is successful, more members of the target audience are able to recognize and become familiar with the health issue. Eventually, with proper strategic planning and campaign management, awareness of the health issue may increase and members of the target audience may become educated about increasing preventative behaviors, maintaining healthy behaviors and/or removing or reducing risky and unhealthy behaviors (Andreasen, 2002; champman-Walsh, Rudd, Moeykens, & Moloney, 1993; Pirani & Reizes, 2005)

## Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To make an in depth study of the various health problems and issues affecting the well being of the tribal population in general.
2. To develop an understanding about the typical health issues and problems faced by the tribal communities of Rajasthan.
3. To explore the role and effectiveness of PR Campaigns in creating awareness about health issues amongst the tribals of Rajasthan thus contributing in addressing and dealing with the health problems in a more effective and successful manner.

## Research Methodology

The study basically focuses on the tribal population and some of the most common problems encountered by them on account of their poor socio-economic status in the society. In this direction the study makes an effort to develop an in depth understanding about the various types of health issues and problems faced by the tribal communities, specially the communities based in Rajasthan. Along with studying the various reasons behind the growing health problems being faced by the tribal communities of Rajasthan, the paper makes an effort to also study how lack of information and education has been a leading reason behind growing cases of ill health amongst the tribal communities of Rajasthan. In this direction, the study employs Case Study Method and makes a deep study of some of the major PR Communication Campaigns executed by various government and private bodies in Rajasthan for the purpose of creating awareness and spreading information about the various health issues and problems and their eradication amongst the illiterate and tribal population of Rajasthan.

## Case Studies of some Successful PR Campaigns

Educating the tribals and firstly creating an awareness in them about health and hygiene is the first step in the direction of achieving health objectives in Rajasthan. The state has no doubt witnessed the launching of various public health programmes for the tribals either in the form of information or education or communication (IEC) Campaigns whether stretching from making the tribals aware of some basic health hygiene like washing hands, going for regular check-ups or immunization drives. Rajasthan being a state of music and dance lovers, so all messages earlier was disseminated through live performers by making use of traditional folk media PR Tools like puppet show, magicians or folk singers or folk dancers.

## Findings of Case Studies and Discussion

### 1. World Bank Project

#### **Rajasthan Health Systems Development Project ASHA reunited through the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM).**

As the access to health care facilities in Rajasthan is very poor specially amongst the tribals. The reasons have been stated above and therefore World Bank has initiated “ A Tribal Development Plan” to fight with some of the major health problems encountered by the tribal communities who comprise a significant percentage of Rajasthan’s population. Under the TDP all earlier existing programmes with the objective of increasing access of tribals to health care services have been compiled and brought under one programme so as to unite all efforts as well as resources to achieve the objective of creating health awareness. The plan aims to pilot tests all schemes and projects and introduce a combined effort to address the issue more significantly. The plan seeks the cooperation and support of NGOs working in tribal areas in the form of incorporating their feedback. As a mark of providing effective health communication services, the project besides ensuring that trained doctors and medical staff members and medicines are made available to the



tribals on time ensuring the provision of qualitative service delivery also tries to take care of establishing good communication network. Under the project and its campaign activities, medical outreach camps were organized in nine deserts and tribal districts where the condition of health care facilities was in a very bad state. A total of six outreach camps were conducted every month in each district to reach out to every tribal person. Each camp was followed by two smaller camps to provide the basic medical facilities and amenities like to providing medicines and follow up health care.

To make the campaigns more effective and popular with mass support, the local population were influenced and drawn towards these camps through every big and small effort even including door to door canvassing by Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and Auxiliary Nurse Midwives. The campaign also made extensive use of all sorts of promotional materials which served as very convincing and attractive communication channels like loudspeaker announcements, banners and pamphlets.

To provide basic ground level medical education and awareness about some major health issues and problems, the campaign also took note of the fact that doctors were brought in on a rotational basis from nearby hospitals which were tied as a part of the campaign. The campaign proved out to be so successful that their numbers kept on increasing exponentially from 15 camps serving 9400 tribal beneficiaries over a period of six months in 2006 to 433 camps catering to some 45000 tribal population in 2008. Mostly the tribals who are chiefly illiterate or semi literate are not able to grasp the technical meaning of various medical information or doctor's prescription or understand the procedures and complexities of availing various medical facilities and as a result they are prone to all kinds of diseases leading to untimely deaths.

Under the World Bank Health Campaign, a very innovative initiative was undertaken where counselors are selected from tribal population and are appointed to visit hospitals to guide the tribal patients and render all kinds of help in the form of informing and educating them to understand the doctor's prescriptions, the benefits of different types of welfare schemes and to counsel them about the various preventive measures and health care guidelines.

The project also includes the services of a human resource development agency, which undertook behavior change communications campaign in six districts. The campaign tried to train the health care providers about the various areas of developing patient friendly behavior and how to develop team spirit amongst them. The campaign had a very focused approach and tried to conduct various pre and post training evaluations in case of health staff personnels to evaluate whether the training sessions were successful in inculcating any change in the attitudes and behaviors of the health care providers as it would greatly influence the type of interaction and information dissemination carried out by them in regard to tribal patients.

The World Bank's Projects and the systematic planning of the campaign have contributed significantly in providing better access to health care facilities and knowledge base by the poor and illiterate tribal communities.

## **2. Special Flour to raise nutrition level of Tribals of Rajasthan**

A very unique and useful health campaign being run across several villages in the tribal dominated areas of Salumbar and Sarada Blocks of Udaipur district in Rajasthan. The campaign tries to create a health revolution in Rajasthan by educating the ignorant tribal masses about the importance of having nutritious diet and how it can be a major driving factor towards making their lives much more happier and prosperous. The campaign initiated since Sept. 2012 tried to motivate the poor tribal households residing in the arid countryside to consume a much more healthier diet in the form of wheat flour fortified with micronutrients; such as iron, folic acid and vitamin B.

The entire campaign was a humble effort from the side of Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) and Institute of Health Management Research (IHMR), Jaipur and executed by the Baruka Charitable Trust (BCT). The National Family Health Survey has found high levels of anaemia along with the prevalence of several other deficiencies both among men and women in Rajasthan. The typical dietary pattern of the local population is that they only consume high quantities of cereal which might be stomach filling and cheap. The intake of pulses, fruits and vegetables having good amount of vitamins and minerals is very less as a result of their poverty and hence they suffer from a number of health disorders and lack of immunity. Hence the staple diet of the tribals which is primarily wheat, oil and milk have been fortified with a mixture of vitamins and minerals. The campaign aimed towards food fortification therefore is a very effective as well as a very cheap and easy way towards providing a better and healthier life to the population.

To make the health campaign a success it was very necessary to educate and motivate the chakki wallas to awaken them about the multiple advantages of using fortified flour by adding the micronutrient rich premix to the flour. The campaign had to employ a strong and consistent communication approach first of all of informing and educating the millers about the multiple utilities of fortified atta and then through them further educate and to encourage the customers to use such flour. The health campaign tried to target the millers by employing them as “agents of change”.

Under the campaign almost 200 chakki wallas were identified from the entire Salumbar and Sarada villages of Udaipur and they were actively involved through series of discussions into all kinds of health and nutrition issues. Besides this training sessions were also arranged for the chakki wallas where they were trained as to how and when to add the premix while grinding and also about the technique of properly storing the premix and maintaining a record of its utilization. To strengthen the impact of the campaign, it was also necessary to remove all miscommunications and to fill up the information gap various awareness building activities were also organized by the BCT and as a part of it the campaign also relied on putting wall writings and posters at various major spots to spread awareness amongst the people about the advantages of using fortified wheat flour in order to lead a healthy life and to fight with problem like anaemia.

The project made a 360 degree approach to spread awareness amongst the people, specially tribals regarding the utility of such flour and as a significant part of it regular community level meetings were held and campaigns were started at the school level to educate the youngsters and to motivate them to pay more attention towards leading a healthier life. Under the campaign street plays were also effectively planned in order to reach out to the ignorant and illiterate masses in a much more appealing and understandable manner. To support the campaign, the Aanganwadi Workers and Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) are working in a very active manner to counsel the village tribal women educating them about the uses of fortified flour.

### 3. Piramal Swasthya Project

A number of CSR Projects have been initiated by Indian corporate organizations for the achievement of socio-economic objectives and for the management of various issues concerning a particular demographic segment of the population thus contributing in the welfare of the nation at large. According to Aranha, J.(2017) article titled, “ These Award-Winning CSR Projects are making Equal Access to Healthcare a Reality in India”. Piramal Enterprises Ltd. In its attempt to execute one of the most significant CSR initiatives implemented the Piramal Swasthya Project.

The prime objective of the campaign is to address a very grave health issue encountered by most of the Indian rural population, namely maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate. As a part of the project 104 toll free health information helpline call centre were started which reaches out to 27 crore people in seven major affected states. As a result of the campaign, crores of people

were benefitted on account of the delivery of various health care facilities and that too at their doorstep.

Another noteworthy project started under the flagship project was the “Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS Project” specially in Rajasthan. The fact cannot be denied that the project has been very instrumental in bringing a change in the lives of tribal population in many ways whether through implementation of different CSR events or delivering of prime health services and facilities to the tribals who are in dire need of it.

#### 4. Vaagdhara Project

In spite of tremendous economic growth of the nation, the Indian remote rural areas chiefly inhabited by the tribal population are still unaffected and deprived from its advantages. Rajasthan has almost 12% of SC and ST population who encounter a number of health problems each day. Vaagdhara, serves as a major project in southern Rajasthan working consistently for the betterment of the poor and illiterate tribal population of Rajasthan.

The project headquartered in Banswara operates in the Southern parts of Rajasthan. The project focuses on some of the key areas of health concern like health and nutrition and child rights protection. The organization has been working from the past two decades and presently it has succeeded in extending its services to more than 53000 tribal families of Rajasthan and 20000 tribal women of Rajasthan.

#### 5. Mera Gaon-Swasth Gaon Campaign

Another significant campaign which was started in the state of Rajasthan helping the people in the eradication and prevention of seasonal diseases is the “Mera Gaon-Swasth Gaon” Campaign under the “Nyay Apke Dwar Campaign”. The campaign was implemented with the joint support of the State’s Health & Family Welfare Department. The campaign had a tremendous reach targeted to cover 75% of state’s population residing in the rural areas.

During the two months period of the campaign, a huge percentage of the population was targeted to be covered and in a significant number almost 2.83 lakh villages, the Committee Members were thoroughly trained to sensitize the rural masses about significant areas like Health, Sanitation and Nutrition

Members were trained about the steps to be undertaken for the prevention of some of the very deadly seasonal diseases thus contributing significantly in restoration of proper health conditions in the very underdeveloped regions of Rajasthan proving out to be one of the very successful and most recalled communication measures undertaken in the direction of educating the rural masses.

#### Conclusion

The Case Studies amply highlighted the fact that the only resort through which the tribal population of Rajasthan can be given a better life free from any kind of health problems and by which they can be enlightened about the various health problems and issues is through proper communication and information. Well planned PR Campaigns conceptualized and planned from the side of health bodies, groups or government departments can be the most effective way to reach out to the masses in a more interesting and interacting manner. Campaigns by using various strategies and activities planned and conducted in a systematic manner for a specific target audience can be the best tool for creating health awareness and in state like Rajasthan where there are a significant percentage of tribal population who are ignorant towards words like health, hygiene and sanitation, campaigns have proved time and again as the most widely used medium to communicate and educate the tribal population towards health and nutrition and they have been very successful in the outcome achieved.

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