

Mainstreaming social responsibility for public distribution of condoms

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Issue: Worldwide, governments purchase large sums of condoms for free public distribution. In LDCs, some purchases focus on lowest price. However, these procurements lack proper quality standards, logistics plans, demand driven forecasts, and partnership strategies. This results in importation and distribution of low quality condoms, shortage or over supply, and lack of involvement by producers. In Brazil, condom companies are pre-qualified by the MOH based on WHO quality standards, improving chances of social responsible firms.

Project: Brazilian MOH main supplier of condoms developed an approach for mainstreaming social responsibility at every stage of condom public distribution. In collaboration with a public health consulting firm, John Snow, it provides high quality condoms for public distribution, assures price well below market prices, and participates in discussions for quality control in a group of experts from the government, NGOs, local testing labs, and companies. Since 1997, the condom company supplied the MOH with 295 million condoms, accounting for 613 batches.

Results: Official testing results from a lab, INT, show that quality standards of public distribution condoms in Brazil are well above minimum international requirements. Out of all 613 batches tested, only 2 were rejected. Also, the average market price for premium brands in Brazil is US\$ 0.2 per condom - 660% more than what the MOH pays for each condom. The company also supported the national official quality team for approval of a quality assurance legislation for MERCOSUL. It also finances a demand driven social marketing project in local communities.

Lessons Learned: Condom suppliers need to take responsibility for AIDS prevention. By mainstreaming social responsibility, condom companies better promote improvements for products they sell and become co-responsible with local governments, NGO, and technical institutions for reducing AIDS among vulnerable populations.