

# SOCIAL MARKETING AS A WAY TO DISTRIBUTE FAMILY-PLANNING PRODUCTS

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Vietnam has a large population and a small area. That is why the Government has adopted the policy to reduce the population growth. This is an effort to reduce social cost, concentrate more investment for development, and improve the quality of life and living standard.

To reduce the population growth, the Government has adopted and launched many programs to propagate birth control methods, distribute necessary products and educate the public in how to use them. With

customers and selling contraceptives at low price instead of giving for free.

But why should they be sold instead of given free when the program aims at persuading as many people as possible into using them? The main reason is that the program to market contraceptives needs participation of traders who only take part in the program because of the profit motive. The social marketing program for contraceptives is based on the existing distribution networks including both wholesalers and retailers. These networks exist in all

ties. This attitude makes the value of goods even lower and leads to wrong use of them. Many people use contraceptive pills for their animals or use as toys for children.

The sale of contraceptives through the distribution networks produces feedback that is needed for inspection and estimate of operation of the whole network. When giving them free, the governmental agencies could only estimate their tasks by studying reports from distributors who usually make false reports. When they are sold, the estimate



these efforts, the widespread use of contraceptives has produced certain results. However, the way in which these programs are carried out reveals many shortcomings which make these results more limited and costlier, especially the program to distribute free contraceptives.

After 1990, programs to distribute contraceptives started to see improvements due to a relatively new approach: social marketing. This approach, introduced by the Directive 37/TTg issued by the PM on Jan. 17, 1997, implies application of business marketing techniques and market advantages to the task of solving complicated social problems. The social marketing mix used for contraceptives means considering users as

customers and succeed greatly in distributing all kinds of goods to customers everywhere. To make use of these networks, customers should pay both wholesalers and retailers something for their service and participation.

Another reason for the sale of contraceptive is that free goods, either contraceptives or anything else, are usually wasted. Where there is no financial discipline, free goods - including contraceptives - are usually left unused somewhere: in houses of persons who are paid to distribute them or in warehouses while reports always say that they are distributed properly. In addition, free goods from governmental agencies are usually considered as poor-quality commodi-

ties. This attitude makes the value of goods even lower and leads to wrong use of them. Many people use contraceptive pills for their animals or use as toys for children.

In short, the sale of contraceptive allows us to reduce waste and make them available for users. The application of social marketing to the distribution of contraceptives is a right approach that makes both suppliers and users more active and produces certain economic efficiency. We hope that the social marketing, along with efforts made by the Government and NGOs, will help the population control program produce intended results. ■