

# **SUPER AMMA (“SUPER MOM”)**

- **Background**

Diarrhoea and respiratory infections are the two biggest causes of child death globally. Almost a million children die of diarrhoea every year. Handwashing with soap could substantially reduce diarrhoea and respiratory infections, but prevalence of adequate handwashing is low. Efforts have been made in past to educate people about health habits by various means such as street shows, rallies etc. Still the percentage of people washing their hands with soap is dismal. So there was a need of something special. Something that would have appealed to the people; something very simple yet very effective. And it was *Super Amma* (Super Mom) Campaign in Andhra Pradesh.

The Super Amma campaign is the culmination of years of behavioural science research to inculcate the habit of handwashing with soap. They designed a communication campaign based on the Evo-Eco theory of behaviour change. Here they make available the approach and the materials that worked successfully in Southern India to inspire and assist you in your behaviour change campaign.

- **Location, Date**

Andhra Pradesh, 2013

- **Areas**

14 villages of Palamaner taluka, AP

- **Stage/Scale**

Rural - 14 villages were selected from 57 eligible villages of average population of 1400 people.

- **Objective of the assignment**

The primary objective of Super Amma Campaign was to create awareness about health habits like handwashing with soap, among the school going children and their mothers. The target that was measurable was a significant increase in the percentage of population using soap for washing their hands.

- **What was done**

Campaigns generally try to spread awareness among people about germs and diseases, but sadly, despite large scale efforts, the results were poor. Many such campaigns proved to be failures. Super Amma worked on a totally different model. The team chose not to focus on words like germs and diseases. Instead, they preferred targeting people’s emotions; and they were highly successful. The team believed that a sound understanding of the factors that motivate people for behaviour change was necessary and they worked on that.

The first step in implementation was creating all the necessary stuff like posters, manpower, communication media etc. The next step was communicating with the village leaders. Following this, multiple activities were undertaken such as:

- Door to door invitation to mothers and families to be a part of the campaign

- School event where teachers would use flipcharts
- School events where the team would perform skits
- Showing short film Super Amma to students as well as their mothers
- Conducting sessions for mothers in the evening when they were free
- Outdoor activities
- Pledge taking of using soaps and maintaining hygiene
- Sticking posters and stickers on and around houses
- Preparing and maintaining report cards of all the hygiene activities
- A situation based play involving Super Amma and Laddu Lingam

## • Impact

The following image depicts the grand success that the campaign has achieved. The percentage of people using soap for washing their hands had increased from a dismal 1 % to a considerable 37 % in just 6 months.



## • Challenges and Issues

The biggest challenge was to target the mentality of people living in rural India. Their '*chalta hai*' and '*isse kuch nahi hota, pidhiyo se chalta aa raha hai*' attitude had to be targeted. People believed that since their ancestors were not following any hygiene habits nor their elders did, and still they enjoyed a healthy life; the same was true with them. Explaining them scientific reasons for using soap was not going to help much. Many such campaigns in past were clear failures.

## • Innovation

Super Amma introduced two innovations which worked amazingly well for them. One is the concept Super Amma itself and the second is the feeling of being disgusted.

An ordinary mother becomes extraordinary when she makes additional efforts to teach her daughter or son good manners and health habits so that she or he can become a successful person in future. Super Amma team attacks the emotional corner of mothers and inspires them to be a Super Amma.

For making the children feel disgusted about their unhygienic habits, the team makes a demonstrative war between Super Amma and her opponent Laddu Lingam. Whereas Super Amma follows hygiene in making laddus (an Indian sweet), Laddu Lingam follows the habits of villagers like using the hands with sand, using dirty water for preparation of dough and using the same unwashed hands that he uses for rubbing his running nose. Since the children normally dirty their hands with similar things, Laddu Lingam challenges that the children would not notice as they are used to eating with dirty hands and without washing hands. But to everyone's surprise, the children disgusted and refused to eat. The team then grew upon the same feeling of disgust and built hygienic habits among children.

The team researched about many programs and came up with a conclusion that it takes 14 days to build a habit. So the Super Amma campaign was designed for 14 days. To remind people on a continuous basis poster, stickers, videos, and pledges were used.

- **Lessons learnt**

Many a time having a desire to bring a change in society and plenty of resources do not suffice the purpose. A deeper understanding of the core feelings is necessary. Another important lesson is that including responsible stakeholders (teachers and village leaders in this case) proves beneficial. An intensive study about the target group besides the project evaluation also played a critical part on the success of the campaign.

- **Financials**

Not available

- **Economic sustainability/Revenue Model**

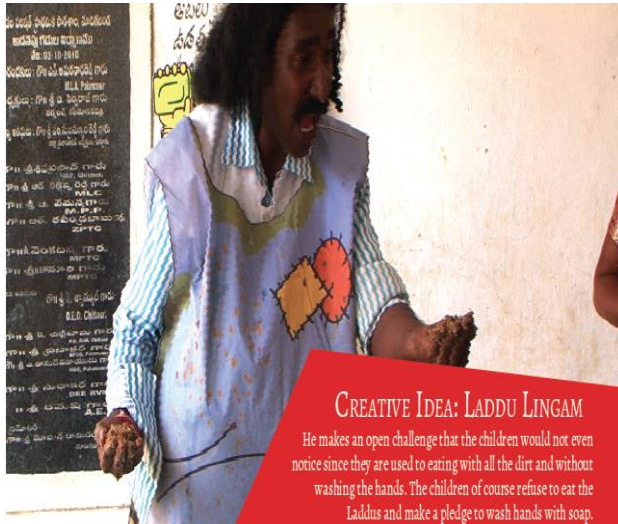
Not available

- **Implementer Contact Persons**

- London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
- Centre of Gravity
- DDB Mudra Group

- **Sources and References**

- Company Website
- 'Super Amma' to the hand washing rescue', a research paper by Kendall Morgan PhD



**CREATIVE IDEA: LADDU LINGAM**

He makes an open challenge that the children would not even notice since they are used to eating with all the dirt and without washing the hands. The children of course refuse to eat the Laddus and make a pledge to wash hands with soap.

### The Story of Supermom

When you choose handwashing with soap, you choose progress.