

Interview with Phil Harvey, President, DKT International  
Conducted by Neha Suchak, Director of Communications, PSP-One Project/  
Abt Associates

**Neha:** I would like to welcome Phil Harvey. Phil was the co-founder of PSI and is now President of DKT International. Phil, welcome and thank you for taking part in this discussion.

**Phil:** My pleasure.

**Neha Question #1:** *You have over 30 years experience working in social marketing, what important lessons have you learned during your time in this field?*

**Phil:** Perhaps the most important lesson is that this approach works. I should say at the outset that I am referring, in my remarks, to the social marketing of contraceptives in developing countries. That is a somewhat different world than from the social marketing of ideas most common in industrialized countries, the anti-smoking campaigns and so on. The social marketing of contraceptives in the developing world is a very successful approach that has proven itself over and over again, now in 68 different countries, serving 40 million couples which is very a substantial portion of all of the couples served by organized family planning programs in the developing world. Indeed, social marketing delivers about 25% of all of the contraceptives for couples using modern spacing methods in developing countries, excluding China. So the remarkable thing, and it tends to be overlooked is that this approach is effective. It has been conducted by a whole variety of different kinds of organizations, it is consistently successful when managed by organizations motivated by the family planning objective, and we should do a bit more to be pleased about that rather than working as hard as we often do to find flaws in the system.

**Neha Question #2:** *What do you consider to be the most difficult challenges for social marketing programs in the developing world today?*

**Phil:** Interestingly, the fact that this approach has been so consistently successful means that everybody is bored with it. And that is, I think that is inevitable. People engaged in international development work tend to be well educated and pretty bright, and such people tend to get bored with doing the same thing over and over again even if it is working quite well. One of the challenges is to keep refreshing the image of this approach and to find variations that spark a little bit of interest without undermining the basic strengths of the social marketing approach. A lot of the variations have not worked very well. The manufacturers model for example has never really succeeded and a number of other variations have had only limited success. Although the jury is certainly still out on the social marketing of things like bed nets for malaria prevention and I think we should all pay attention to those initiatives and see how well they succeed. They may very well call for emulation and expansion. The boredom factor is one challenge, but it is partly off-set by two other phenomena in the social marketing panoply of characteristics.

The first is that social marketing has made the transition into detailing. Traditionally a contraceptive social marketing program focused on over-the-counter contraceptives, primarily condoms and oral contraceptives, sold strictly through retail networks, including pharmacies but basically retailer outlets, and we have now learned, most social marketers, the detailing process that is calling on providers to sell injectables, oral contraceptives and IUDs. A very large number

of injectables and IUDs are now being sold this way through social marketing networks, and smaller numbers of implants, emergency contraceptives and female condoms. The detailing bridge has been successfully crossed.

The second phenomenon is the earnings phenomenon. A number of social marketing programs now, and it's a growing number, are beginning to earn their own way through sales revenue. The increasing incomes, in Asia and Latin America particularly and very low prices for contraceptives on international markets are making it possible for programs like Colombia's, DKT's program in Brazil, DKT's program in the Philippines, and probably in a year or two the Indonesia program, to generate enough revenue so that the donor requirements are lessening to a very manageable level.

Those two variations are helping to keep life in the system and I am hoping will also help in keeping donor interest in this approach, in the face of, as I mentioned earlier, the tendency to get bored with this approach because it has been around for so long.

**Neha Question #3:** *Given your experience, in your opinion, what is the new wave of social marketing? What should practitioners and donors be prepared for in the years to come?*

**Phil:** To the extent that incomes continue to rise, in Asia particularly, I think that we can expect to see a growing number of programs earning their own way and that will mean a kind of hybrid organization. DKT itself is an a kind of schizophrenic evolution at the moment between the traditional NGO social marketing that we do in very low-income countries such as Sudan and Ethiopia and Mozambique and those countries such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Mexico, Brazil and Malaysia where it is possible to earn your own way or most of your own way. We'll see more of that, assuming that liberal economic policies continue to be the trend in Asia and Latin America because the world is getting richer, and it will therefore be increasingly possible for social marketers to earn their own way and to maintain their own programs with only very minor donor inputs. Those same programs will be able to accommodate donor requests in a new way also because donor's can fund specific closed-ended projects without feeling any obligation to continuing to support a basic organization, which itself will be financially healthy.

So that I think this is a coming trend and that I think this will be the biggest new thing. I think that traditional social marketing in low-income African countries will continue to function as they have and will continue to make a very substantial contribution and one we should be very pleased about.

**Neha:** Phil, on behalf of the PSP-One project I'd like to thank you for sharing your experiences and perspectives here with us today, we really appreciated it.

**Phil:** I enjoyed it too, thanks.