

Interview with Bruce Mackay, South Asia Regional Director, HLSP
Conducted by Neha Suchak, Director of Communications, PSP-One Project/
Abt Associates

Neha: I would like to welcome Bruce Mackay. Bruce is the South East Asia regional director for HLSP. Bruce, welcome.

Bruce: Nice to be here.

Neha Question #1: *Bruce, given the years of experience you have, what important lessons have you learned in the field of social marketing?*

Bruce: The first is that setting up markets, getting markets going, whether commercial or social is a long-term venture. Whereas donors take three years, half the time and five years. So there is an essential mismatch there. This is a lesson I've learned; NOT to take a long-term view, unfortunately, but to take the short-term donor view and live with it.

The second one is to take the existing commercial sector much more seriously. I think much of social marketing, much of donor funded social marketing, has largely ignored the commercial sector. They don't take the existing business very seriously. There are exceptions, like in Tanzania with the mosquito nets, but on the whole they haven't taken the existing commercial sector very seriously.

Thirdly, I think social marketing works for products, but I remain doubtful that it works for services. It certainly works for products, but I remain dubious as to whether it is going to work for services.

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

Bruce: The first and the biggest challenge is the one that was the same ten years ago that it is today, which is about coverage, distribution. I think a typical social marketing program can achieve, 10%, 20%, 30% coverage. In some exceptional circumstances they can get higher but the sort of coverage required to achieve interventions, required to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, you're talking about 80%, 90%, 100% coverage. And I think that the difficulty of getting the commercial sector to distribute products, cheap products such as condoms, contraception pills, or oral rehydration pills, whatever they are it is difficult to get them out into rural area and small towns.

The second challenge is to get governments on board. Social marketing is a largely donor driven business but it is actually the governments themselves that need to really take it on board and take it seriously. I am talking to you from India where the government has been very proactive on social marketing for 30-40 years; they've got a very good track record. But most governments, especially those in Africa, they regard social marketing as something that donors do with donor funded agencies such as PSI or DKT or Futures group, its not really something that they do themselves.

The third one is really to move away from the product to the services. I think there are some exceptional programs such as PSI's Green Star Network in Pakistan, but it has had lavish funding. They have done a good job, but I think only really thanks to the lavish funding. So I think social marketing of services remains one of the largest challenges.

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

Bruce: Funnily enough, I think that the really big new wave won't involve donors and won't involve practitioners, or not the current set of practitioners. In Gujarat here in India, the government, the ministry of health has looked around at its maternal mortality rates and said, what are we going to do? It looked and said, under our noses there are over 2,000 private sector doctors here in Gujarat, we'll contract them directly. No donor money, no NGOs, no PSI or Futures Group or any involvement like that just a straight forward decision by a government, looking at the reality of private markets, or a public health cause. And here in India 80% of all healthcare is governed by the private sector. The direct contracting of private sector providers by governments is going to be the new wave, where there are those private providers. Where there are not private providers, direct contracting of social enterprises, I suppose NGOs that are not just picking up government money, but almost set up on purpose to run and deliver government services, where there is the private sector. So I think direct contracting by governments is going to be the new wave.

Neha: Bruce on behalf of the PSP-One project I would like to thank you for your participation today.

Bruce: My pleasure.