

No Easy Place to Do Family Planning

In Pakistan, DKT rises to the challenge by meeting needs of women

Sughra grew up in Korangi, a very poor town southeast of Karachi, Pakistan with a population of more than 500,000. In 2010, she received her midwife's diploma and returned to Korangi. She was a midwife in name but had no money, and no infrastructure or equipment to operate a clinic.

She heard about *Dhanak* Health Care Centers, DKT Pakistan's network of midwife-owned and managed clinics started in 2012, and was invited to one of their meetings. She signed up and was accepted into the network.

In 2013, her clinic was built and opened, the only health facility in the immediate vicinity (the nearest hospital and government health clinic are four kilometers away). She says the community prefers her services because she is in the neighborhood and available 24/7.

Sughra says that family planning is becoming more popular in her area and estimates that 40% of the women there are using a form of modern contraception, compared to 26% in the country as a whole. IUDs are the most popular method (she inserts 10-12 of them per month).

Sughra is just one example of how DKT is revolutionizing family planning in Pakistan, especially in rural areas where contraceptive use is even lower than already low national rates.



Sughra, a community midwife in Pakistan, says family planning is becoming more popular in her area.

Pakistanis Face Family Planning Barriers

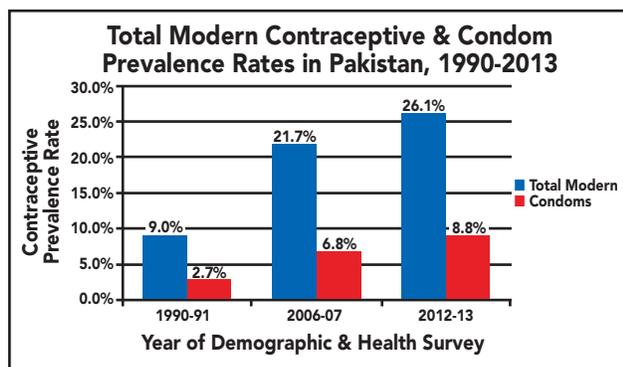
Pakistan is not an easy place to provide family planning. It is a conservative society where only 26% of married women use a modern method. The condom is the most popular modern method (8.8% of married women) followed by female sterilization (8.7%). Long-term reversible methods are not popular, according to the 2012-2013 Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey: IUDs are used by only 2.3% of women and implants did not even merit a mention.

Yet more than 20% of married women say they want contraception but cannot access it. Cultural norms, family expectations and lack of discreet access to family planning

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products and services hinder contraceptive use, especially by young couples.

DKT is working to address all three of these barriers. In 2012, DKT started a program to provide couples with affordable and safe options for family planning through social marketing and social franchising, with a particular focus on rural and underserved areas where contraceptive use is lower.



This graph shows the modern contraceptive and condom prevalence rates as reported by the last three demographic and health surveys. The male condom is the most popular modern method.

Rapid Scale-Up of Social Marketing

As in other countries, DKT started its work in Pakistan by establishing a strong social marketing program, leveraging the infrastructure and incentives of the private sector to deliver high quality, affordable contraceptives.

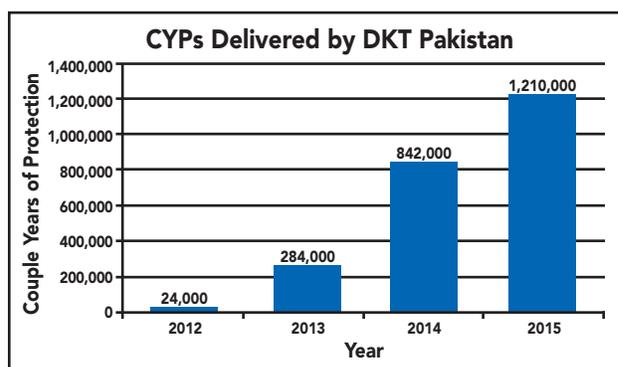
DKT sells a variety of reproductive health products with the objective of promoting healthy spacing and timing of births. DKT ensures that these products are affordable in all corners of Pakistan through more than 50 distributors and widely dispersed networks. DKT puts these products into thousands of little shops on the side of the road, supermarkets and pharmacies.



One of the many pharmacies in Pakistan where DKT sells condoms and other contraceptives.

DKT advertising blends modern views of pleasure and choice with traditional norms, and instills confidence in the products. These ads are promoted on television and radio but also on rickshaws and pharmacy walls. Through DKT advertising, more men are familiar with, and willing to use, condoms, and women have a greater choice of contraceptives, including long-acting reversible contraceptives, which have long been underrepresented in Pakistan.

Starting in 2012, sales skyrocketed. The number of couple years of protection (CYPs) has increased and, in 2015, DKT Pakistan's product sales averted an estimated 300,000 unwanted pregnancies and 280,000 unsafe abortions.



Improving Access through Social Franchising

Pakistan is 65% rural, and people often travel long distances to obtain basic health care, making condoms and contraceptives difficult to acquire. When a woman is able to visit a health provider, she may find clinics that exist in dilapidated facilities, face product stock-outs and are staffed by providers without up-to-date information.

In 2012, DKT launched the *Dhanak* (“rainbow” in Urdu) social franchising network to alleviate these obstacles and expand access to family planning in rural areas. Social franchising is a network of private health providers who provide a standardized set of products and services. It brings greater access, cost-effectiveness and quality to family planning. The *Dhanak* program:

- Helps midwives build or refurbish branded health clinics,
- Ensures availability of high-quality and affordable family planning products and services,
- Provides ongoing training to health providers, and
- Undertakes activities to increase demand for clinical services.

In the *Dhanak* training program, DKT instructors educate midwives and physicians on a range of topics, including proper IUD insertion and removal, the use of misoprostol and counseling on side effects. These trainings also teach entrepreneurial skills to ensure self-sufficiency. Since DKT launched *Dhanak*, it has trained more than 800 providers each year.

After training, providers are eligible to register a *Dhanak* social franchise in their community. DKT regional health advisors supervise these franchises, providing on-going support to ensure that quality standards are met.



Each franchised clinic is branded with the *Dhanak* name and provided with furniture, a fresh coat of paint, and quality medical equipment.

At the end of 2015, DKT’s *Dhanak* network included 1,100 clinics in the provinces of Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Balochistan, with continued expansion ongoing. The clinics operate in all parts of Pakistan — from the deserts of the Sindh in the south to the snow-capped Himalayan peaks in the north — including areas where few other non-governmental organizations are present.

In 2015, DKT also started *Dhanak* clinics in Karachi under the SUKH Initiative led by the Aman Health Care Services with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

In KPK Province, family planning is especially challenging and access to female health providers is limited. Conservative cultural beliefs and religious extremism further

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complicate the accessibility and popularity of family planning in this region. Therefore, DKT Pakistan provides special support to the more than twenty *Dhanak* health facilities currently in operation there. It also supports government clinics in Swat.

Pushing the Boundaries of Mass Media

DKT respects Pakistani culture but pushes relentlessly for improved health. Sometimes this ruffles feathers. In 2013, DKT aired a provocative TV advertisement for JOSH condoms that featured controversial Pakistani supermodel and actress Mathira Mohammad. The government banned the ad after receiving complaints. In 2015, the government banned another JOSH condom TV spot that portrayed an exuberant man purchasing a large box of condoms (both ads, entitled “JOSH Condoms Mathira” and “JOSH Condoms The Big One,” can be viewed on the [DKT YouTube channel](#)).

Reaching New Users through Interpersonal Communication

Mass media, however, can only go so far in promoting family planning in Pakistan. Mass media cannot be used to advertise prescription products and can be problematic for hard-hitting condom advertising, as demonstrated by the two banned TV spots. Therefore, DKT also uses interpersonal communication.



Educating men is critical to user acceptance of family planning.

In these campaigns, DKT representatives travel to communities to entertain and educate couples about the benefits of contraceptives. During these events (mobile video shows, carnival games, *JOSH* floats and *Heer* IUD tea parties), DKT promotes its products and connects community members to sales outlets and *Dhanak* clinics.

Potential for Future Growth

DKT Pakistan has three main goals: 1) To increase use of family planning by providing greater access, choice, and affordability; 2) to employ effective behavior change communication strategies to create demand for reproductive health goods and services; and 3) to provide a reliable, affordable network of service delivery throughout Pakistan. Much work remains to be done and DKT looks forward to serving better the reproductive health needs of Pakistani couples.



1701 K Street, NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20006
Tel: 202-223-8780 • Fax: 202-223-8786
Info@dktinternational.org • www.dktinternational.org
Follow us on Twitter: dktchangeslives

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