

Funding drought hits biotech



Praj marches ahead strongly in the global market place/ **53**

India offers a number of opportunities for growth in diagnostics: Mr. Richard Guest, CEO, Siemens Healthcare/ **38**

India's challenge is to build excellent scientific research at basic level: Prof. Satyajit Mayor, Director, NCBS, Bangalore / **26**



Social impact through sustainable community development



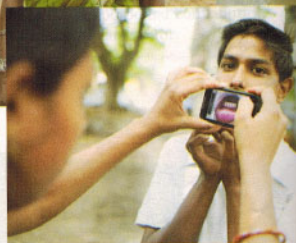
Biocon's housing project in Bagalkot

As an emerging global biopharmaceutical enterprise focused on delivering affordable healthcare, Biocon's commitment goes beyond developing new medicines. Biocon is engaged in providing sustainable solutions to address the myriad healthcare challenges faced by the country as a part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

It supports education initiatives imparting better learning to the underprivileged students in rural schools. It is also constantly engaged in empowering communities through sustainable solutions and has facilitated better infrastructure including health-centers, community centers, primary schools, proper sanitation,

water and light sources in various districts of rural Karnataka.

It is also constantly engaged in several public-private partnerships to implement integrated programs aimed at making a difference. Biocon's comprehensive healthcare efforts span preventive, primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare programs. Under its preventive health education programs, Biocon realized that preventing and managing chronic disease would be challenging. Patients must often change their lifestyle and behavior. Thus, the Foundation has fused elements of education and prevention by implementing an extensive preventive health education program. This addresses water-borne diseases, hy-



Oral cancer screening program

giene-related and chronic illnesses, as well as maternal health and childcare.

Biocon's Community Health Workers (CHWs) conduct preventive health workshops to educate villagers on nutrition, personal and environmental hygiene, good sanitation and hand washing habits. The workshops have been attended by almost 200,000 women and children so far. The Foundation has also taken the initiative to build over 800 toilets in

Karnataka to not only ensure better health for all community members but also the safety and privacy of women and children.

Oral cancer still remains one of the most debilitating and disfiguring of all malignancies. As part of its CSR commitment, Biocon has embarked on an innovative program that leverages technology for the early detection of oral cancer through mobile phone screening and education. This is a collaborative program with the state government and ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers.

The oral cancer screening program conducted by the Foundation in high risk groups in three pilot villages in FY13 covered over 5,000 people. Of these, over 300 individuals were detected with positive lesions, who were then taken to the nearest diagnostic center for a biopsy. The program has led to early intervention and potential cancer cure. It also aims to drive the cessation of tobacco products usage, which is the root cause of oral cancers.

Biocon Foundation has also rolled out a comprehensive cervical cancer screening and treatment program in collaboration with the Mazumdar Shaw Cancer Center (MSCC). The program aims to target a substantial percentage of women in the High Risk Group (sexually active women in the age group of 30-49 years) in its field practice areas.

Malnutrition, in children, is another area that is addressed by Biocon Foundation. A government survey in the Bagalkot district of North Karnataka had identified that over 3,000 children under the age of five were malnourished. In partnership with the Bagalkot local administra-

tion, Biocon Foundation rolled out a program to address this issue.

The Foundation has about nine Arogya Raksha clinics operating in various districts of rural Karnataka, offering clinical services to the communities around them. These services ensure that the rural poor have access to efficient health management via competent clinical care, disbursement of affordable generic medicines and simple cost-effective diagnostic tests. As many as 75,000 patients benefited from these clinical services in FY13.

Since education holds the key to progress, the Biocon Foundation has made concentrated efforts to empower rural Indian youth. Aiming to provide computer-aided learning, extracurricular activities, life skills education, and English language skills for rural children, the Foundation has spearheaded several education programs such as Chinnara Ganitha, which seeks to strengthen the learning of basic mathematical concepts; Aata Paata Wadi, an after-school resource center for children from local government schools; Kelsa+, an initiative that tries to inexpensively reach out to low-income staff in Biocon's campuses.

The Chinnara Ganitha program has generated data that indicates that children have significantly benefited from these books. Their computational skills are way above those who have not had access to these books. From 11,000 Chinnara Ganitha maths work books in 2006, it now prints over 100,000 books.

The Foundation also provides support for infrastructure in some villages like community centers, primary health clinics, proper sanitation, safe drinking water, and rain water harvesting facilities. More importantly,



Children's education project 'Chinnara Ganitha'

Biocon has built a new village to resettle villagers of Mangaludda in North Karnataka, which was washed away in floods a few years ago.

The Foundation's efforts were directed at constructing over 400 new houses equipped with toilets and solar lights for each house. A primary healthcare center and a school was also set up to make the village self-sustained. The houses were handed over to the government and are now being allotted to the villagers.

Biocon today integrates CSR thinking into every aspect of its business and is always looking for ways to create economic value, and at the same time address society's needs and challenges. Biocon Foundation through its various initiatives aims at social and economic inclusion by ensuring that marginalized communities have equal access to healthcare services and educational opportunities.



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About the author

Rani Desai is the head of strategy and operations, Biocon Foundation. She heads and manages all the functions of Biocon Foundation. Rani and her team have spearheaded the setting up of the Arogya Raksha Yojana (ARY) clinics, which also supports the Foundation's micro health insurance program.