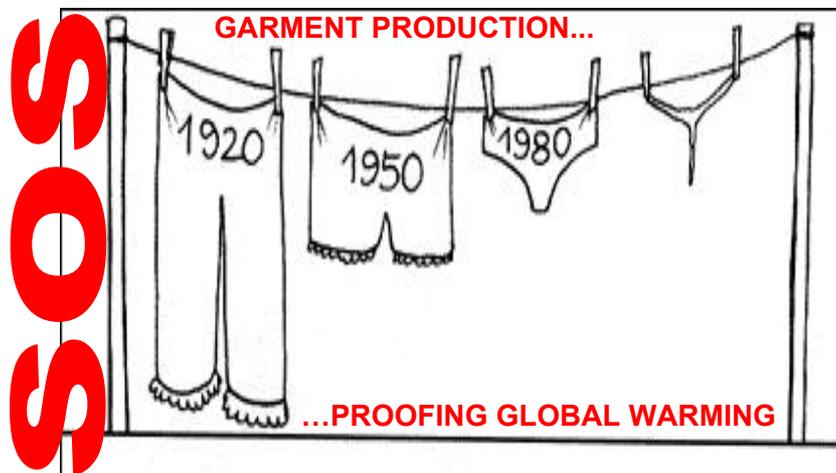


# Report: Mutual Program for Reproductive Health Services with seven garment companies in Tirupur/ India

[ by Alec Gagneux - [www.fairCH.ch](http://www.fairCH.ch) ]



## 1. Summary

Mr. B. Moeri, the **S**ocial **C**ompliance **O**fficer (SCO) of Migros Switzerland asked several of their partner-companies in Tirupur, if they want to integrate reproductive health services in order to help their employees preventing HIV and unwanted pregnancies. Every company who indicated their interest, had to agree in financing the program with an amount of money relative to their turnover. Mid September I travelled to India, in order to work together with the motivated managers who wanted to get these Human Rights integrated in their infrastructures.

Several meetings with different stake holders were organized and visits in the companies were necessary, in order to familiarize the people with the suggestions explained in the declaration ([http://fairch.ch/DeclarationPreventionSwitcher\\_2.doc](http://fairch.ch/DeclarationPreventionSwitcher_2.doc) ). Every company had the freedom to integrate the program in its own way. The social compliance officers of the different factories had to learn to **work together in a non-competitive way**. One coordinator (Mr. Arumugam from Armstrong) managed right from the beginning on the mutual fund – which got filled for the payments of the planned installations and for future programs. How the money shall be used, is decided by the participating SCO's in a democratic process.

The production of the different means (condom-boxes, condom-bags, book-stands etc.) got organized by me. In Cooperation with the SCOs I installed several condom-boxes, condom-bags and book-stands in order to teach them, how to do it and why doing it in a particular way (psychology; easy access; caring, that not too many condoms can be taken by male etc.).

These installations can only be beneficial in the long run, when they are maintained and if the workers (also female) can find condoms and information in the dispensers when ever they need it in a dignified way.

Thanks to the mutual program, it became also possible to open the heart of the managers for more, than only its own staff: Condom-Boxes in Tirupur railway station, in two bus stations and in two hospitals are maintained and monitored by local **N**on-**G**overnmental **O**rganisations (NGOs).

It is common sense, that these physical installations must be accompanied with practical trainings which shall take place at least once a year. Tamil Nadu state has the highest number of AIDS-victims in India

(<http://www.nacoonline.org/index.htm>)!!! This proves, how important it is, to follow up pragmatic, uncomplicated steps by the government. But - the government cannot do it alone ... that's why it is so important, that the **private sector** is starting to prove its sense of responsibility by actions! **This report shall motivate more decision-makers to become member in the family of doers who want to prevent unnecessary suffering like unwanted pregnancies or Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs): Thank you for contacting [info@fairch.ch](mailto:info@fairch.ch).**



Tirupur Hospital

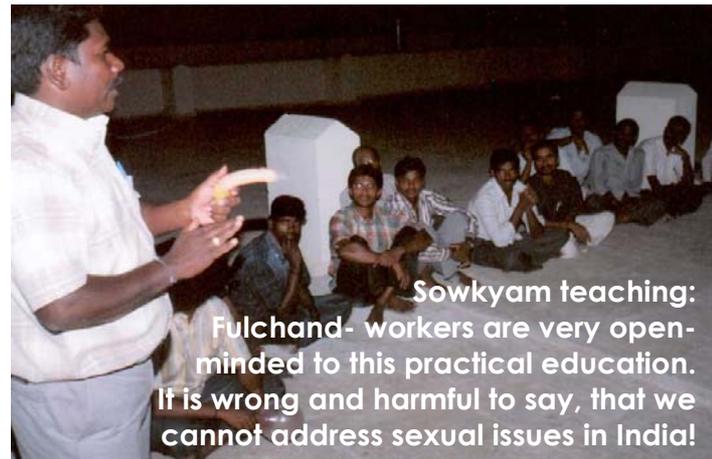
## 2. Aims

- Easy and dignified access of condoms for women and men: 99%
- Easy and dignified access of health information for women and men
- Good synergy of Govt. programs and private initiatives for the benefit of staff and their families
- Minimizing accidents in regard of health and family planning
- Enhancing, together with the medical doctor(s), the 'cafeteria approach' for family planning
- Feedback from participating SCOs twice a year
- Sustainable benefit due to good maintenance of the installations and a practical monitoring system



## 3. Actions

- ✓ Six Migros – partner companies (Armstrong, Aviram, Eastman, Fulchand, Hero Fashion, Wellknit) in Tirupur agreed to adopt the program. The Switcher – partner (Prem) was ready to offer me dormitory and infrastructure (office, workshop, storeroom etc.). Prem also offered all the 50 books “Where there is no Doctor” in Tamil language and 100 printed Condom-Bags benefiting all 7 companies.
- ✓ Production of 30 Condom-Boxes and 30 Book-Stands by a local entrepreneur.
- ✓ Translation of the flyer into Malayalam language (Kerala) by Mrs. Kuruvilla (Eastman). In Tamil language the flyer exists since 2001.
- ✓ Discussing the entire program with the Managing Directors (MDs) of the different companies: They all agreed, to install the means in order to guarantee a dignified condom supply for women and men; to guarantee information about health in general (Book “Where there is no Doctor”); to stick (paint) STOP AIDS (& PLAN FAMILY) on their trucks; to choose two responsible (one man, one woman) for each unit who are in charge, that condoms and information remain available; to organize a health gathering for at least 95% of the staff once a year.
- ✓ Training the SCOs how to install and maintain Book-Stands, Condom-Boxes, Condom-Bags and Flyer-Distributors (sensitive education).
- ✓ Maintaining a fund with mutual money guaranteeing good quality of the program for long term. The present coordinator of the Social Compliance Officer group is administrating this money in his company (Armstrong).
- ✓ Re-Filling the already installed Condom-Box (2003) in the Tirupur railway station: Mr Kannan (Tel. 0421- 2430554) from the local NGO “Women's Education and Awareness Development” (WEAD), received an order from the TANSACS (<http://tnsacs.tn.nic.in>) Project Director (Mr. J. Kumar – Tel. 09840045215) to maintain the Condom-Box and the installed book “Where there is no Doctor”.
- ✓ Sowkyam – an other NGO from Tirupur is in charge to maintain the installed Condom-Boxes and Book-Stands in two Tirupur Government hospitals and in the new and old bus stand ([sowkyam@gmail.com](mailto:sowkyam@gmail.com)).
- ✓ A gathering with teachers from Migros school allowed me to exchange experiences with people who influence future – generations. It became clear, that **practical** social and environmental non-formal education is missing in the curriculum. Sexual education e.g. is a great taboo: If this is not taught, then kids are not protected from AIDS and unwanted pregnancies!



## 4. Challenges

- In the Tirupur Government Hospital near the old bus stand there is now the possibility to get HIV/AIDS counselling. When I visited the building, I was surprised, how many people were waiting. Many pregnant women e.g. were present in order to check, if there is a HIV – danger for the coming child. This infrastructure is very helpful, because the testing facilities can prevent the spreading of HIV/AIDS by knowing, if one is HIV+ or not. As there are so many migrant workers it is very important to convince the people that they both should first check their blood before having a new unprotected sexual relationship. An even more difficult situation exists, if the migrant partner comes home after some time: usually women do not have enough power to refuse sexual conduct without (mutual) AIDS-Test! **This is one of the most important issues, which must be communicated to the audience during the compulsory annual health-workshop in each of the companies.** Behind the information-glass of the Condom-Box the SCOs are asked to communicate the possibility of confidential AIDS counselling in Tirupur.
- The seven companies participating in this program do have the potential to share their know-how with other companies. If more and more managers have the wisdom, **not to act competitive in social and ecological fields**, then so much unwanted suffering can be prevented:



## 5. Further steps (Sustainable Development)

This reproductive health program is one of the important elements, which has to continue and improve in order to reduce unwanted suffering through preventative actions. That's why the maintenance of the program must be guaranteed by several control-mechanisms [1] and by enough money [2] which shall guarantee further beneficial investments and follow-up expenditures. Following activities must be fulfilled:

- Twice a year, the SCOs of each company have to send me a short report about the program: **End of February and end of August.**
- The program coordinator must invite his Social Compliance friends at least once a year to exchange experiences. If decisions must be taken – e.g. if money from the mutual fund is needed for a specific program or for material – then they are the result of democratic debates.
- If the Government is not able to provide enough condoms, then the fund is there to buy good quality condoms in the private market! Condom supply must be reliable (99%)!
- If the books on the Book-Stands are not in good shape anymore, then they have to be replaced. If the Condom-Bags are unclean, please replace them with washed ones.
- Take care, that the flyer dispensers are always holding the information-papers in order to guarantee, that staff has the possibility to take sensitive education flyers home.
- SCOs have to supervise the male and female responsible, who are in charge of maintaining the installations in each of the different units of the companies.
- If you have any question or if you do not know, how to solve a difficult situation in regard of the reproductive health program, you can always contact me.
- **Share your know-how with other companies/ other people.**

## 6. Conclusions

Family planning and AIDS prevention is not the only necessary action needed, to approach **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (Rio 1992 Definition)**. Unfortunately nearly all managers follow blindly the mantras of western 'experts' who try to convince us, that more economic growth is needed to solve our problems. Of course this path leads to more and more destruction of

