

Report on Interface Meeting
Evolving Responsible Pharmaceutical & Private Healthcare Sector through Multi-Stakeholder
Engagement
July 06, 2013-Hyderabad

1. Introduction

1.1 Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS-International) in partnership with Andhra Pradesh Private Hospitals & Nursing Home Association (APNA) organised an Interface meeting “Evolving Responsible Private Healthcare & Pharmaceutical Sector through Multi-Stakeholder Discussion”, on 6th July, 2013 in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. The main purpose was to initiate a discourse between key stakeholders on the challenges facing uptake of business responsibility in both the sectors.

2. Session I: Welcome Session

2.1 The meeting started with Dr. RS Saluja, State President, APNA, welcoming all the participants. He initiated discussion with making a formal announcement that APNA would start internal discussions for framing a Code of Conduct for its private hospitals members in Andhra Pradesh to promote the concept of business responsibility. The code of conduct would be based on the National Voluntary Guidelines on Social, Environmental & Economic Responsibility of Business (NVGs) released by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs in 2011. He added that APNA and CUTS would work together on this issue.

2.2 He further stated that in order to promote the concept and ensure the adoption of business responsibility in both the sectors, it is necessary to have clarity about definitions of and distinction between ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ and ‘Business Responsibility’ among the private hospitals and pharma firms in the state’.

2.3 He observed that being a responsible business entity implies taking care of all aspects related to production, marketing and distribution of good and services produced by the businesses. He emphasised the need to create awareness and build capacity of private hospitals and pharmaceutical firms for becoming more responsible in their conduct and congratulated CUTS for taking the initiative of promoting business responsibility among private hospitals and pharmaceutical firms.

2.4 Subsequently, Rudra Shankar representing CUTS in the meeting mentioned that in order to achieve the objective of sustainable growth in the long term, it is required for private hospitals and pharma firms to adopt responsible way of doing business. However, there are certain challenges facing uptake of responsible business and it is imperative to evolve

a discourse between the key stakeholders related to both the sector, in order to overcome these challenges. He further elaborated that through this meeting CUTS and key actors would try to comprehend difficulties faced by the private hospitals and pharmaceutical firms in becoming more responsible. Understanding these limitations would allow preparation of a roadmap for promotion of better business in the sectors at the state level.

3. Session II: Evolving Responsible Pharmaceutical Sector through Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

3.1 Session II started with Rudra Shankar delivering a brief presentation on the BRCC project. The rationale was to provide basic information regarding the project to the participants. The presentation dealt with all aspects related to the project i.e. overall concept, research methodology, sectors, research problems, various activities undertaken during the project, major findings, way forward etc.

3.2 Subsequently, another presentation “Outline of a Blueprint for Responsible Private Healthcare & Pharmaceutical Sector at the State-level” was delivered by Rudra Shankar. It informed participants about the objective behind organising interface meeting. It helped participants to understand that all of us were required to be focused towards discussing the challenges, creating barriers towards adoption of business responsibility. Presentation also dealt with some information regarding the capacity building workshops that was organised by CUTS for both private healthcare and pharmaceutical sector. During the workshops representatives of pharmaceutical firms and doctors informed about the challenges being faced by both the sectors.

3.3 During the interface meeting participants were supposed to discuss all the challenges pertaining to both these sectors and suggest actions required for overcoming them and outcomes it would lead to both in terms of short term gains and long term benefits. It would help in developing a blueprint of responsible private healthcare and pharmaceutical sector which would be shared with the policymakers in order to trigger desirable reforms in both the sectors.

3.4 Next to this, participants were invited to provide their inputs regarding actions required to mitigate the challenges pertaining to pharmaceutical sector. All the challenges got discussed one by one. Some of the challenges such as lack of technical skill and knowledge among the state regulators was given due importance and it was suggested that there should be provision of training to improve upon this particular aspects. Enhancing use of Information & Technology (IT) for timely dissemination of information and proper implementation of regulations was emphasised during discussion. Improving

communication between the stakeholders of pharmaceutical sector was also stressed upon by all the participants during the meeting.

4. Session III: Evolving Responsible Private Healthcare Sector through Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

4.1 This session focused upon the challenges being faced by the private healthcare sector. Again the same method was adopted and participants were requested to deal with the challenges one by one. All the participants accepted that healthcare sector has great significance in terms of ensuring quality life for people and hence it should be properly regulated. Any deviation from the part of doctors or hospitals from their basic role of providing quality healthcare service to people would adversely affect society at large.

4.2 Some of the main challenges discussed were lack of skilled manpower and infrastructure with the state government, lack of awareness among the regulators about the issues facing private healthcare sector, hospitals not following rules and regulations, presence of too many association with different mandates which are often conflicting in nature etc. According to participants combined efforts are required from stakeholders group related to private healthcare sector to curb these problems and ensure quality service to people as well as sustainable development of the industry.

4.3 Apart from this, KVS N Gupta, Assistant Director, Drug Control Administration, Ministry of Health, Govt of Andhra Pradesh, emphasised that it is important to improve the communication between the key stakeholders in both the sectors. Further, I Raghunatha Swamy, Joint Chief Environmental Engineer, Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board, lauded the effort being made by CUTS for promoting the concept of business responsibility. He stated that such activities would be beneficial for both industry as well as the community at large. Dr. Kiran Paryani, Secretary, Indian Medical Association (IMA-AP) was also present during the meeting, provided his opinion on ways to improve understanding between the state regulators, private hospitals, pharmaceutical firms, associations and other relevant stakeholders. Informing to the house, he said that IMA as an association has always tried to promote ethical conduct from the part of its members.

4.4 At last vote of thanks was delivered by Dr. RS Saluja. He extended gratitude towards all the dignitaries for blessing the occasion with their presence and providing their valuable inputs for promoting the concept of responsible business in private healthcare and pharmaceutical sector.

4.5 The event marked an important development in terms of preparing a blueprint of a responsible private healthcare and pharmaceutical sector at the state level. The

participants representing various stakeholder groups such as state regulators, pharma association, medical association, pharma firms, doctors, civil society etc. provided their inputs for mitigating the challenges creating obstacle in the way of adoption of responsible conduct and outcomes it would ultimately lead to.