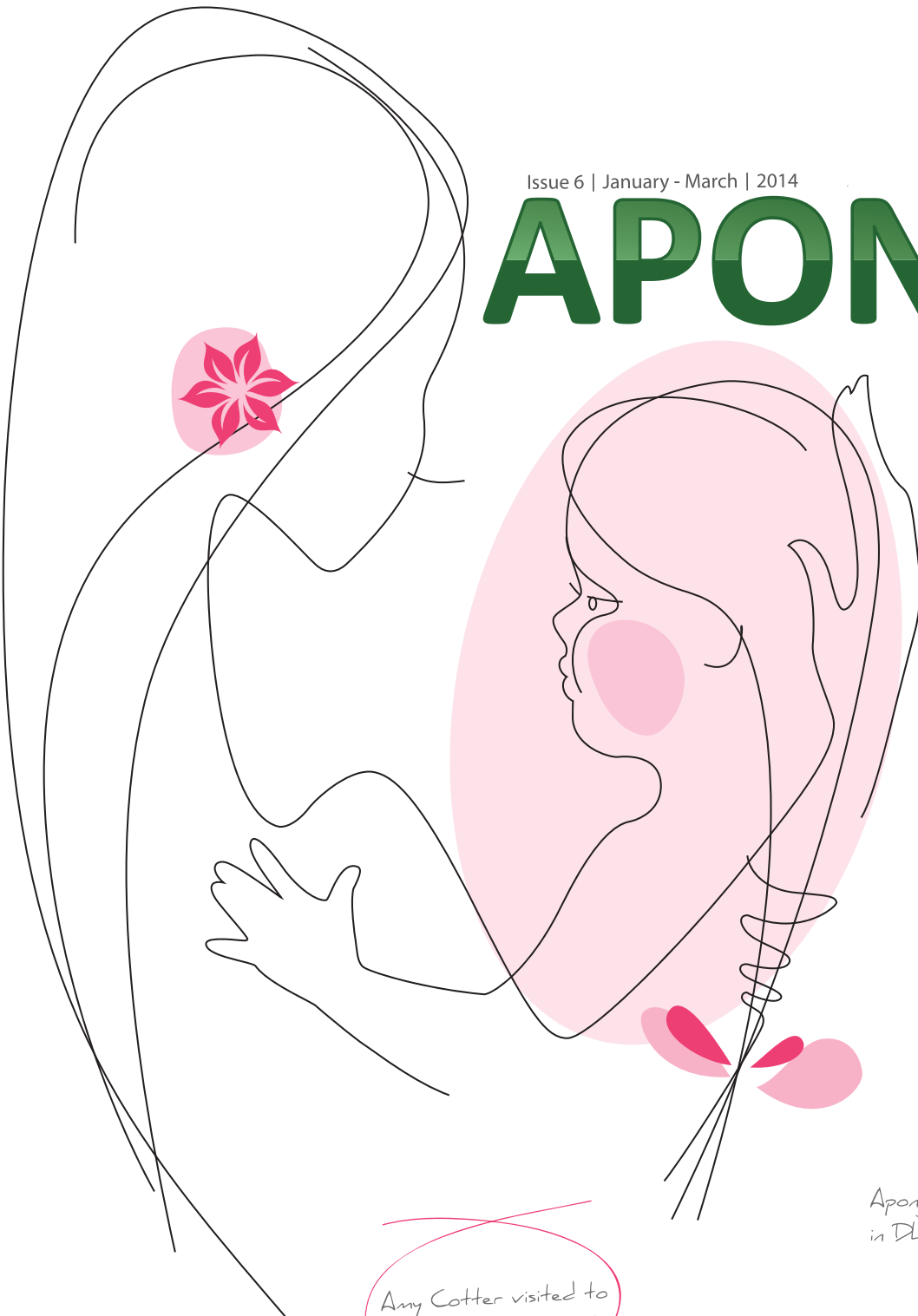




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APONJON

NEWS



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promote SMC product



USAID
আমেরিকার জনগণের পক্ষ থেকে



Aponjon, a Unique Service in the Mhealth Sector

In 2012 Aponjon was launched with the goal to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality rates in Bangladesh. With USAID funding and through implementation by Dnet, the Aponjon service quickly grew and is now widely known for providing critical health information for pregnant women and newborn children. After the national launch in December 2012, Aponjon achieved over 400,000 subscribers within a short one year period. The remarkable success of Aponjon can be attributed to its wide partnership network, which includes USAID as the primary donor, corporate sponsors, and national outreach partners-- BRAC, SMC, MaMoni, NHSDP, and Infolady.



Leveraging the increasing accessibility of mobile phones in Bangladesh, Aponjon uses innovative mobile technology to improve health knowledge and

practices of pregnant women, new mothers, and their families. Through Dnet's innovative technology team, Aponjon revitalized their mobile service to include a 24 hour counseling line with support from a doctor, a social marketing campaign that promotes health messages, and a community based health fair at a number of areas throughout Bangladesh. Due to Aponjon's collaboration with the five major telecommunication operators in Bangladesh, which together cover 99.5% of the market, this service reached over 400,000 pregnant women and new mothers to their mhealth service at the end of March 2014.

Aponjon offers enrollment in the service through household visits and in remote areas of the country. Brand promoters travel throughout communities to introduce Aponjon, and in order to effectively increase awareness, subscribership and popularity,



the mobile phone service was translated into Sylhet dialect; Chittagong content is currently being prepared. Another expansion of the program is to increase the service to include children under 5 years old from the original under 1 population.

Aponjon focuses efforts on sustainability, reliability and affordability and has shown vast expansion and success. Nevertheless, Aponjon is continually looking at ways to improve the service. Dnet and Johns Hopkins University Global mHealth Alliance recently published a formative research report that identified gaps and recommendations to improve Aponjon’s mobile health service. However, the fact remains this service has revolutionized the mhealth sector in Bangladesh and has enormous potential to contribute to improving healthy behaviors among pregnant women and families.



An infant mothers smile depends on “Aponjon”

Aponjon and MaMoni Health Systems Strengthening Join Forces to Improve Maternal and Newborn Health

Aponjon is a health information service that sends messages to pregnant women, new mothers, and their families. By delivering vital health information, Aponjon aims to achieve improvements in health knowledge and practices. Aponjon's goal to improve maternal and newborn health aligns with other USAID-funded initiatives in Bangladesh, including MaMoni (2009-2014) and the MaMoni - Health Systems Strengthening Project (2013-2017). In July 2014, Aponjon will be implemented under the purview of MaMoni HSS.

Aponjon conducted an interview with Dr. Ishtiaq Mannan, Chief of Party of MaMoni HSS, to discuss the unique collaboration between Aponjon and MaMoni HSS.

Aponjon: Aponjon aims to improve the health of pregnant women, new mothers, and newborns. USAID funded Aponjon: the mobile phone based health service came into action with the help of Dnet as the implementing agency. What are the commonalities between MaMoni HSS and Aponjon?

Dr. Ishtiaq Mannan: Like Aponjon, MaMoni HSS is a USAID-funded project. The objective is similar for both the initiatives which will help create a solid foundation for future work. The goal of MaMoni HSS is to improve the health welfare of new mothers and pregnant women. Right now, one area we are focusing on is improving food habits and nutrition, which is similar to the objective of Aponjon only using a different platform.

Aponjon: Aponjon and MaMoni HSS are working on two slightly different implementation platforms. One platform is a mobile phone based service and the other is field based. Given these slightly different platforms, how successful do you think this partnership will be and why?

Dr. Ishtiaq Mannan: Before the national launch, Aponjon and MaMoni (the predecessor project of MaMoni HSS) began working on the pilot based activity. This partnership evolved and MaMoni health workers were used to provide door-to-door outreach for Aponjon registration. In the research phase, a field survey was conducted to justify the

demand for Aponjon service and through MaMoni's outreach, this service has proven to be successful by casting a wide net of rural communities. Not only do MaMoni and Aponjon collaborate well together, this initiative has really shown their faith in the project and positive attitudes.

Aponjon: Aponjon is an information and communication technology (ICT)-based service. Is it relevant for the rural society of Bangladesh?

Dr. Ishtiaq Mannan during the discussion with Aponjon team

Dr. Ishtiaq Mannan: There has been a huge increase in the usage of mobile phones in the country even before Aponjon's service became available. With the existence of mobile phones, the majority of people living in rural areas had the experience and confidence with this platform therefore the introduction of Aponjon's service did not require building capacity of the subscribers. In agriculture, health, environment, or other sectors, ICT is an extremely important networking tool.



Dr. Ishtiaq Mannan, Chief of the party, MaMoni

The people of Bangladesh can easily adapt to new innovative technology and now with the cheaper phones, more people can have access to these services.

Aponjon: Aponjon and MaMoni hope to fulfill the dream that every mother has the right to health. In order to make this dream a reality, both programs will need to work together for the long run. What is your opinion on that?

Dr. Ishtiaq Mannan: MaMoni HSS is planning to work with Aponjon more closely beginning July, 2014. At that time, Aponjon will contribute more in the health sector by working for the government of Bangladesh, which MaMoni HSS is doing now. MaMoni HSS and Aponjon will work in underserved areas where health facilities for women and children are less available. At the same time, Aponjon and MaMoni will jointly help the government by disseminating necessary health advice. Whatever services can be provided by using technology, we will try to accept those to help in this endeavor. This digital platform of Aponjon is not only for disseminating health messages but will be developed as a

health information system that will monitor maternal and child mortality data as well as other relevant data. We hope this program will expand and gain more traction in the future.

Aponjon: Thank you for your valuable time and for sharing your experiences with us. We wish you the best of health.

Dr. Ishtiaq Mannan: Thank you.



Dr. Ishtiaq Mannan during the discussion with Aponjon team

Aponjon Hosts Visitor to Share Program Learning and Successes

Amy Cotter, Communication Analyst at USAID Global Health Bureau, traveled from the United States to Bangladesh to learn more about Aponjon and its success. On March 11, 2014 Ms. Cotter visited the Aponjon office and after a short discussion session on the future of Aponjon, she visited the field to observe activities. Here in the field, Ms. Cotter witnessed Aponjon in action and was able to observe how this service is provided to pregnant women, new mothers, and their families. She interviewed some subscribers of Aponjon and spoke to BRAC health workers who helped to complete the registration forms. She praised the hard work of the Aponjon team for achieving remarkable success within such a short time period and planned to write an article on Aponjon health service for a USA based journal.



Amy Cotter interviewing Aponjon subscribers

Aponjon Fair in Dhaka City

The Aponjon fair is one of the most important campaign activities as this allows Aponjon to promote their service on a large scale. On January 2014, two fairs were held in the slum area at Dhaka city to provide information and services to garment workers. The fairs were held at Kollyanpur pora bosti (burnt slum) and Rayerbazar slum. Both are densely populated areas where the fertility rates are

comparatively higher than other areas and the education level is low. Considering these challenges and the need for increasing access to health information, Aponjon team selected these two slums for arranging these fairs. The fair was inaugurated by the slum committee president and local partners Shobujer Ovijan and Spreeha Foundation attended the fair. Approximately 200 mothers and more than 150 expecting mothers received free medical check-ups and medicine. Aponjon corporate founding partner, Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd., donated the medicine as an in kind contribution to Aponjon.



Aponjon fair held in Dhaka

Aponjon Interactive Voice Response (IVR) will Promote Social Marketing Company (SMC) Product

SMC and Aponjon both have goals to reduce child mortality. In Bangladesh, a large portion of children are malnourished and in response to battling childhood malnutrition, the Social Marketing Company created a unique product called Monimix, a micronutrient program. Both SMC and Aponjon plan to promote Monimix through voice SMS advising that children aged 6 months and up should receive nutritious food in addition to breast milk. During the pilot stage, one single product will be introduced and based on the outcome of this program, Aponjon may promote additional products. This advertisement will launch April 2014. Once the program

launches, Aponjon hopes that subscribers will be mindful with the food choices provided to their children and ensure nutritious foods are incorporated into their diet. Aponjon’s plan moving forward is to promote additional SMC products through IVR endorsement.

This type of appreciation from internet users is inspiring in a country like Bangladesh where mobile phone based health services is relatively new.

One Brand Promoter Brings the Power of Aponjon to 180 Subscribers

Aponjon’s slogan--The power of health in every mothers hand—signifies not only the service, but the strong connection between mother and child. Kali Kinkor Das, a brand promoter for Aponjon, lives in Rajbari, Goalondoghat and shared his words with the Aponjon team after receiving the honor of being the top performer in January 2014. Mr. Kinkor completed 180 registrations in one and half months. Kinkor stated that, “within five minutes of explaining Aponjon services to a mother, it becomes easy to convince her”. Anytime Kinkor comes across his subscribers, these women share their positive experiences using the service and explain how helpful the reminder message and awareness generating advice are. This type of ‘silent’ guardianship gives women a feeling of reliability. Mr. Kinkor received an umbrella and t-shirt from Aponjon as a gift however Kinkor uses these gifts as a marketing tool so the women become more familiar with the brand. Mr. Kinkor feels very proud to be connected with this noble initiative.



SMC product- MoniMix

Aponjon Becomes Increasingly Familiar over the Internet

Sami-UI Alam, a software engineer living in Bogra has recently become a new father. Sami and his wife are both Aponjon subscribers. Sami wanted “to become a successful father so one day while browsing the internet I noticed the uniqueness of Aponjon. Thinking of the safety of my unborn child and after reading the detailed information on the website, I decided to put my faith in Aponjon service”. Sami self-registered by dialing 16 22 7 and he immediately received messages from Aponjon about the importance of feeding colostrum milk to the newborn baby. In addition, Sami was informed that, two visits to the doctor within 42 days after delivery is extremely important. Sami shared his experiences using Aponjon and the information he learned with his neighbors and friends. Through this knowledge sharing, Sami motivated his friends and neighbors to also subscribe to the service.



Kali Kinkor Das receiving Aponjon gift



Aponjon registration process on Aponjon website



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