

Pink Star: A Network to Offer LARC Methods Through Private Sector Graduate Providers

Social Marketing Company (SMC) is providing Long-acting Reversible Contraceptive (LARC) services through graduate doctors under Pink Star network. Pink Star program initiated in 2013 with USAID support. Since then it has carried out various activities to raise awareness and to increase accessibility, availability, and utilization of IUD, Implant, and Injectable services through private medical practitioners. USAID donates IUDs and Implant Contraceptives to support the initiative.



A demonstration session on insertion of LARC methods

SMC implements this program in collaboration with the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP) and the Obstetrical and Gynecological Society of Bangladesh (OGSB). The program promote Pink Star outlets as a source of quality LARC services.

SMC provides training and ensures supply of IUD and Implant contraceptives to the doctors at subsidized price. Doctors who are mostly OBGYN and willing to contribute in national family planning program specially long acting contraceptives are eligible to enroll in the Pink Star network.



Outer packaging of Relax IUD



Outer packaging of i-plant implant

In Bangladesh, IUD use rate has remained plateau over the past decade. The main factor behind this scenario is the negative image on IUD associated with side effects and complications. Myths and misconceptions about IUD has also contributed to the negative impact for acceptance of the method. The provision of offering IUD through graduate doctor is significantly contributing to regain its image. SMC overbranded IUD as Relax and Implant as i-plant as a marketing strategy.



Signboard of Pink Star outlet

A branded signboard is hanged outside of the chamber of the providers. SMC promote the Pink Star outlets through distributing brochures and leaflets in the community, hanging banners and posters in the center. As part of the digital presence and promotion of the network, a website has been developed. The site www.pinkstarbd.net offers updated information about LARC methods, recent events of Pink Star program and nearby service delivery points for potential clients.

Pink Star providers counsel on family planning, offers IUD, Implant and injectable services and promote (counsel and prescribe) multiple micronutrient supplement (MMS) for pregnant women. Pink Star providers are playing important role to integrate MMS and Calcium in ANC services.

The responses of the program are encouraging. The graduate doctors, in many cases, are proactively discussing with their clients on various family planning methods and informing about the availability of LARC and Injectable services. It may be noted that LARC method users have slightly decreased in the country from 2.7% in 2017 to 2.1% in 2022 (BDHS).



Doctor counseling on family planning

SMC observed that interpersonal communication and detailed counseling play an essential role to help potential clients to decide on LARC methods. It prompted SMC to recruit community-level counselors to create demand for LARC services. As of December 2024, the network has 612 Pink Star providers across the country. In the year 2013, the program distributed 2,887 LARC methods (Relax and i-plant) which have increased to 14,740 in 2024. Since inception, they have administered over 67,000 IUDs, 37,500 implants and 95,000 injectables from their outlets.



Counselor counseling on family planning at household

A study in June 2018 measured the attitude, perception, and practice of the Pink Star providers and beneficiary of LARC users. It included 200 IUD and 133 Implant users as respondent. Besides, they interviewed 132 Pink Star providers. Following is a brief overview of the findings:

- In most cases, providers administer IUDs during cesarean delivery or post abortion care.
- SMC appointed counselors play a critical role for creating awareness and motivate users to accept LARC methods.
- The major motivating factors of the users for adopting LARC methods include these give protection for longer period and are hassle free.
- About 90% IUD users and more than 92% Implant users were satisfied with receiving services from the Pink Star providers.



Performance review meeting with Pink Star Providers

Following table shows the Pink Star provider coverage by divisions as of December 2024:

Divisions	# of Districts covered	Total Provider	Female Provider	Male Provider
Barishal	5	25	17	8
Chattogram	11	143	130	13
Dhaka	13	127	120	7
Khulna	9	80	68	12
Mymensingh	3	25	24	1
Rajshahi	8	106	104	2
Rangpur	8	70	66	4
Sylhet	3	36	34	2
Total	60	612	563	49

For more information

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