

From the Department of
CORPORATE STRATEGY AND INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

CASE STUDY SERIES

> **Selling Health:
Hindustan Lever Limited and
the Soap Market**

Introduction

In the category of infectious diseases, only acute respiratory infections and AIDS kill more people per year than diarrhea, which accounts for 2.2 million deaths annually.

India contributes 55% of all diarrhea deaths in the world.²

These statistics outline the pervasiveness of diarrheal disease in the developing world and the tremendous toll it takes on the public health, especially among the poor and children. In India alone, 19.2% of the children suffer from diarrhea.³ At the same time, the preventive measures and cures are relatively simple: access to safe water and sanitation facilities and instruction on better hygiene practices. Yet, in spite of the efforts of NGOs, developmental agencies and governments, the problem persists. So what is a viable solution?

THE INNOVATION. . .

The paradox of diarrheal disease is that the solution is known and inexpensive, but it is difficult to reach and educate the poor about the need to wash hands with soap. Hindustan Lever Limited (HLL), the largest soap seller in India, created a unique approach to public-private partnership as a solution, as well as made this public health issue an integral part of their business.

This document traces the efforts of HLL, the Indian subsidiary of Unilever, in combating the social health issue of diarrheal disease through innovative methods of marketing a common consumer good--soap.

This report was written by M. Murch and Kate Reeder, under the supervision of Professor C.K.Prahalad. The reports are intended to be catalysts for discussion and are not intended to constitute effective or ineffective strategies.

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