Creating Social Epidemics

Using Diffusion Theory to Promote Innovation Adoption and Sustained Behavior Change

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BECC Conference, Sacramento
November 17, 2008
The Plight of Women

- Taliban revoked all women’s rights
- Women live in seclusion
- 2nd highest maternal mortality rate in the world
- 80% + illiteracy
Homophilous?
Heterophilous
Religion: Sunni Muslim Majority
The Process of Diffusing a Pro-Social Innovation

Problem → R&D → Launch → M&E
Diffusing SADA and Civil Society

Problem

R&D

Civil Society

Parliamentary Election

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The Sada Player: A Technological Innovation

- "Voice" in Dari
  (ghaag/rag in Pashto)
- MP3 technology (low cost)
- Plug-and-play chip
  (cannot be modified)
- Solar-powered
- Speakers or ear-buds
- No instruction manual required
Civil Society: A Social Innovation in Afghanistan

- Civil society refers to the arena of voluntary collective action, around shared interests, purposes, and values (important for strengthening democracy)

- Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, NGOs, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.
How to Diffuse the Innovations?
Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The process by which (1) an innovation (2) is communicated through certain channels (3) over time (4) among the members of a social system.
## Diffusion Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Publications</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>3,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>5,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5,680</td>
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+ 120 new studies/ year
Adopter Categories

- **Innovators** – enthusiasts, venturesome
- **Early Adopters** – visionary/respected
- **Early Majority** – pragmatic/deliberate
- **Late Majority** – conservative/skeptics
- **Laggards** – traditional
The Innovation-Decision Process
What Determines Rate of Adoption?

- **Perceived attributes of innovations**
  - Type of innovation
    - Optional/individual, collective, mandated

- **Communication channels**
  - Mass media, “small media,” interpersonal

- **Nature of the social system**
  - Norms, degree of network interconnectedness

- **Extent of promotion efforts**
Perceived Attributes of Sada Technology

- Relative advantage
  - Solar powered/no cost
  - Consistent message
  - Access to message anytime/anywhere

- Compatibility
  - Oral/audio
  - Compatible with need for information
  - Entertainment-education programs
  - Readings from Koran
  - Messages from local leaders
Attributes of Sada Technology

- **Complexity**
  - "?" button for oral instructions
  - Simple language

- **Trialability**
  - Family members and friends could try using the *Sada* (popular with children)

- **Observability**
  - Pink and silver colored *Sadases*
  - Men brought *Sada* to mosque
  - Women brought *Sada* to women’s centers or gathered women in homes
How Did We Translate Theory Into Practice?

![Graph showing the innovation adoption rate with critical mass highlighted]
The Process of Diffusing a Pro-Social Innovation

Step 1:
Situation Analysis/Formative Research
Understand the Intended Adopters

**Intended Adopters**
- Current KAP (-gap?)
- Myths and misperceptions
- Readiness to adopt (where in the innovation decision process are they?)
- Perceived self-efficacy
- **Opinion leaders** (Who? How connected?)
- “Where or from whom...?”

**Context**
- Program/policy environment
- Communication capacity
- Partners (PPP)
- Infrastructure (e.g., electricity)
Identify SPECIFIC Barriers to Adoption

**INDIVIDUAL LEVEL**
- Lack of knowledge about importance of civil society/Parliamentary election
- Cultural norms/traditions (women in seclusion)
- Religious beliefs (“it’s Allah’s will”)
- Low literacy levels
- Low perceived susceptibility
- Low perceived severity
- Levels of self-efficacy
- Cost
- Access

**SOCIETAL LEVEL**
- Lack of security/Taliban
- Poor infrastructure (few civil support organizations; not enough places to register to vote)
The Process of Diffusing a Pro-Social Innovation

Problem R&D Launch M&E

Step 2:
Develop Messages
Sada Content:  New to Afghans

- Civil society
- Democracy
- Parliament
- Constitution
- Women’s rights
- Human rights
- Children’s rights
- Rural Development
- Health and hygiene

Delivered in a culturally appropriate/legitimate manner:
- Clerics/Community Leaders
- Skits
- Songs
Position the Innovation With Regard to Attributes

- What is the key benefit/advantage for adopting the innovation?
- How can we build on existing experiences to demonstrate the need for the innovation?
- How easy is the innovation to understand/use?
- Can the adopter try the innovation?
- How can we increase the profile of the innovation?
The Process of Diffusing a Pro-Social Innovation

Problem → R&D → Launch → M&E

Step 3:
Distribute SADA
SADA Recipients: Opinion Leaders
Was the Diffusion of Information Successful?
The Process of Diffusing a Pro-Social Innovation

- Problem
- R&D
- Launch
- M&E

Step 4: Evaluation
Sada Evaluation (Quantitative and Qualitative)
Sada Users Learned About Civil Rights

“When I heard the Sada I realized we all have a right to vote. And that we can vote for men or women. We came to know that we can give only one vote and that all people can vote – whether he has a big job in the government or is a normal person. We learned that we should vote for whoever we feel can do the most to improve our lives.”

– Niloufar, Parwan Province
Sada Content

Perceived as:
- Trustworthy
- Accurate
- Credible
- Interesting
- Entertaining
- Easy to understand

Encouraged INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION with:
- Spouse
- Family
- Friends
- Colleagues
- School mates
Sada Users Learned…

- That they needed a voter registration card
- How/where to obtain a voter registration card
- Their role in the voting process (participating in a civil society)
Sada Users Learned...
Did the *Sada* encourage people to vote during the Parliamentary Election?
Yes, Especially Women

“We went to the voting center and voted. The Sada helped us decide to vote….We didn’t know we could vote earlier.”

– Female FGD respondent, Parwan Province
“All the women were so happy on election day. When we saw women going out to vote it looked as if they were going somewhere special for sightseeing, or for an important occasion. We did not want to ignore uneducated women so we decided to explain the importance of Sada’s messages to these women. After they learned about voting they went and registered themselves. We worked with them and the day of the elections all the area was blue because of all the women wearing blue chadoris (veils). It was like a women’s army.”

– Shahjahan, Paktya Province
SUMMARY: Why was SADA successful in diffusing the concepts of civil society/Parliament, and motivating people to vote?
The SADA:

- Was context appropriate (relative advantage over other media)
- Was culturally appropriate (compatible content)
- Was easy-to-try, easy-to-use
- **Encouraged dialogue** (especially for women) – “social epidemic”
- Rapidly moved people through the innovation-decision process
- Motivated **re-invention** (influence by local pride of ownership) – greater multiplier effect
Thank You
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Afghanistan’s Ethnic Makeup

- **Pashtun**: 42%
  - Origin: Claim descent from ancient Hebrews
  - Language: Pashto
  - Religion: Sunni Muslim
  - Live in: South and east of the country

- **Tajik**: 27%
  - Origin: Persian descent
  - Language: Dari
  - Religion: Sunni Muslims
  - Live in: Northern Afghanistan, near Iran

- **Uzbek**: 9%
  - Origin: Turkish descent
  - Language: Uzbek
  - Religion: Sunni Muslim
  - Live in: Plains north of the Hindu Kush

- **Hazara**: 9%
  - Origin: Mongol
  - Language: Dari
  - Religion: Shia Muslim
  - Live in: Central highlands

- **Others (Turkmen, Aimaq, Baluch, Nuristan, Kizilbash)**: 13%

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**Population**: 24.9 million
**Population growth**: 3.9%
**Main languages**: Pashto and Dari
**Religion**: Islam (majority Sunni)

Source: CIA World Factbook 2004, American Red Cross, UN

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