

# Adaptive Resilience of a Social Enterprise During Adversity

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The COVID-19 pandemic presented a challenging situation to the business organizations all over the world. This challenge was even more tough for the social enterprises as they function in resource constraints which increased due to the restrictions on physical movement. The case study discusses how a social entrepreneur repurposed her operations through adaptive resilience. The framework of adaptive resilience has been studied in the context of the social enterprise, Vyomini, a rural women entrepreneurs' network that used to manufacture sanitary napkins at affordable rates before the pandemic. During the pandemic, Vyomini showcased their adaptive resilience and started manufacturing essential items like masks, sanitizers, etc. The case study explores the various components of adaptive resilience with the various stages of adversity (i.e., immediate response, recovery, and renewal). It shows that the components of adaptive resilience (i.e., communication, collaboration, leadership, and learning) are necessary for creating as well as sustaining adaptive resilience.*

## ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

Prachi Kaushik, a Delhi-based social entrepreneur quit her job with the Delhi government to pursue her desire to work for the rural women. She set up a social enterprise, Vyomini which is a manufacturing unit of biodegradable sanitary napkins. It aims to provide with affordable sanitary napkins to the unprivileged women from rural backgrounds of North India while using an innovative and adaptive business

model. It involved and encouraged the rural women to not only make sanitary napkins but also market the product that they made. In this regard, Prachi started working along with many rural women to improve the level of awareness about menstrual health and hygiene, and then educated them how to manufacture sanitary napkins followed up by scaling up the production.

In the rural parts of India, public usage of terms like ‘menstruation’ and ‘sanitary napkins’ were still considered as taboo. But she decided to bring a change in the mindset by making women independent. The idea is to encourage women to start an enterprise single-handedly. To do this, she conducted Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) where she trained and changed the lives of thousands of women by giving them the knowledge and support to become women entrepreneurs by manufacturing Vyomini’s biodegradable sanitary napkins.

Vyomini, a social enterprise, was started in the year 2016 with the aim of manufacturing affordable, low-cost, and biodegradable sanitary napkins. The aim was two-fold i.e., to make the low-cost sanitary napkins easily available to the rural women and make them independent by giving them adequate support to manufacture the product. Apart from this, Prachi and her team worked for using natural fibers as well as locally available raw materials which could be used for making the sanitary napkins. This required a lot of research and after almost two years of struggle, Vyomini launched its first low-cost, biodegradable sanitary napkin at a price of \$0.03 per napkin. The manufacturing units of Vyomini were set up in the rural areas of Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi. The goal was to develop a manufacturing technique that would utilize the locally and easily available raw materials to make the best quality biodegradable sanitary napkin. The manufacturing system was also kept decentralized as well as localized so that the rural women could plan and arrange the materials required by themselves. The manufacturing process was explained to them in a simple manner so that it could be easily followed and scaled up effortlessly.

As on late 2021, Vyomini had around 50 full-time employees along with a large network of rural women entrepreneurs. This network had only been increasing in size along with time. This happens as the rural women interact among themselves and spread a positive word-of-mouth about the product. This led to a greater number of women using Rakshak, Vyomini’s sanitary napkin. Since this is a recurring need, there are plenty of repeat purchases that happen as a result, more rural women join in the network. This way not only the network of rural women entrepreneurs increased but it also led to making them self-dependent and addressing a basic need. Towards the end of year 2021, a few lakhs of women were a part of the network, and this number was constantly growing. The network has been able to bring together women from the remote corners of the country and make them manufacture an essential product that is sold online i.e., through Vyomini’s website as well as on e-commerce

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