Teck: Saving children’s lives by reducing zinc deficiency

Key Results:

Zinc Alliance for Child Health

- More than 8 million children under five with diarrhea symptoms treated with zinc and ORS through ZACH programs.
- More than 29,000 healthcare providers received training/orientation on benefits of zinc and ORS on childhood diarrhea.
- Subsidized price of zinc and ORS co-pack distributed in Burkina Faso (reduced from 600 CFA to 100 CFA) to enable accessibility to families.
- 92% of districts in Kenya had no stock out of zinc and ORS in 2013 thanks to a commodity mapping system established to assess stock status at all public health facilities.

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- 70 million people at risk of zinc deficiency have had access to zinc-fortified staple foods through the Teck-BASF partnership, including ‘e’Pap’, a pre-cooked fortified porridge distributed in several African countries.
- Affordable Nutritious Foods for Women (ANF4W) project in Kenya and Tanzania is improving the availability of fortified staple foods for women of reproductive age and increasing nutrition awareness through social marketing.
- Zinc & Health champions appointed at 13 operational sites of the company; program has resulted in improved employee engagement within the company.

IN 2011 TECK, one of the world’s largest producers of zinc, committed, through its Zinc & Health program, to scale up access to zinc and use its resources to educate the public about the importance of zinc for human health. Teck has since committed $10 million to the Zinc Alliance for Child Health (ZACH), a $25 million initiative to scale up zinc and oral rehydration salts (ORS) as a diarrhea treatment in countries with high under-five death rates. Operating in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya and India, ZACH’s goals are to:

- Generate demand for zinc and ORS and ensure caregivers are aware of when and where to seek treatment.
- Improve the knowledge of health providers to promote appropriate treatment and care.
- Ensure wide availability of high-quality, affordable zinc and ORS.
- Secure a conducive and supportive policy and regulatory environment for treatment.
- Ensure the harmonization of efforts across partners to maximize impact of individual investments.

Through a 3-year partnership with BASF, Teck also worked to develop innovative and affordable zinc fortification and supplementation solutions with the goal of reducing zinc deficiency among 100 million people in developing countries by 2015. The Teck-BASF partnership has helped provide zinc fortified staple food products to people at risk of zinc deficiency in Mexico, Kenya, Uganda, Indonesia, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and China.

everywomaneverychild.org
PARTNERSHIPS

The Zinc Alliance for Child Health (ZACH) is a unique public-private-civil society partnership that aims to develop and sustain zinc treatment programs that save the lives of children. Its partners include Teck (CAD$10 million), the Government of Canada (CAD$15 million), the Micronutrient Initiative and UNICEF Canada. Their approach is to prioritize harmonization and leverage impact. For example, several of the countries where ZACH operates have established comprehensive public-private national-scale 5-Year Plans for reducing pneumonia and diarrheal deaths.

The Micronutrient Initiative (MI) is an international not-for-profit organization responsible for ZACH project implementation. It establishes close working relationships with public sector organizations as well as local NGOs in countries where ZACH operates. Teck and the Government of Canada provide funding to the ZACH partnership and sit on the ZACH Advisory Council.

The Teck-BASF business-to-business partnership successfully leverages the strengths and competencies of each company: BASF’s cost-effective micronutrient solutions, analytical and formulation expertise, and distribution partnerships, and Teck’s high quality, affordable zinc product. The partnership has resulted in the development of an innovative zinc test kit, iCheck Zinc, that analyzes the zinc content of a food or premix so that producers and authorities can ensure a product is fortified to the level it claims.

LESSONS LEARNED

The partnership has recognized that external factors such as time delays have a serious impact on target projections and budgets, requiring a need for flexibility when operating in certain markets. Another important lesson is understanding the motivations of beneficiaries. Inadequate knowledge and misperceptions of the benefits of treatment and the fact that diarrhea is seen as part of growing up means that caregivers often delay seeking treatment. ZACH therefore identified a need to provide orientation to pharmacies and retailers and improve prescription practices of healthcare workers, and also to extend education to mothers and rural community health care workers on the significance of zinc and ORS. Consumer preference is also central: just because it’s good for you doesn’t mean you’ll buy it. Education on the long-term health benefits of zinc and the devastating impact of micronutrient deficiencies is essential in promoting use of treatments and fortified foods.

NEXT STEPS

Addressing the global challenge of zinc deficiency requires many strategies. Short-term solutions like therapeutic zinc and ORS require individual compliance and consistent supply and delivery, but have significantly reduced preventable deaths of children. Food-based approaches, including fortification, are more sustainable strategies for improving the micronutrient status of populations. Increasing access, availability and education on the benefits of fortification have a positive effect on long-term health and nutrition. Teck will continue working with its partners to educate the public and ensure both short- and long-term solutions to zinc deficiency are scaled up so that zinc is available to those who need it most.