



GBCHealth
Mobilizing Business for a
Healthier World

Reaching the Health Millennium Development Goals: *The Critical Role of India's Business Sector*

November 13, 2013

Investment Case #3 Corporate Support to Reduce Child Diarrheal Deaths

Diarrhea is a leading cause of child death in India. The average child experiences three episodes of diarrhea each year and in 2012, 140,000 children in India died from complications caused by diarrhea. Most of these deaths occurred in children under the age of two. Children in India are extremely vulnerable to diarrhea because unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene combine with malnutrition to create a vicious cycle of infection and nutrient depletion leaving severely malnourished children up to 9.5 times more likely to die from diarrhea. Further, children in India do not routinely receive the vaccine that protects against one of the leading causes of severe diarrhea - rotavirus - and more than 70 percent do not receive the recommended treatment for diarrhea - oral rehydration salts (ORS) and zinc.

[Evidence](#) shows the interventions with greatest impact on reducing child diarrhea deaths include:

1. Vaccination: The rotavirus vaccine is highly effective at preventing one of the leading causes of diarrhea. A recent [study](#) revealed an exceptionally high incidence of rotavirus diarrhea among children in India and rotavirus diarrhea is responsible for millions of outpatient visits and hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations each year. Making the rotavirus vaccine routinely available to children could reduce annual diarrhea deaths by more than 30 percent.

2. Treatment: Treating diarrhea with oral rehydration salts and zinc could reduce child diarrhea deaths by 90 percent and is one of the most cost-effective solutions available in child health. Frontline health workers should be trained and equipped to treat children with ORS and zinc and families should be aware of the importance of rehydration and zinc therapy

Rotavirus Vaccines for India The Evidence and the Promise



during bouts of diarrhea. Families should have access to quality, affordable ORS and zinc products close to home at both public and private sector health outlets.

3. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: Improved water supply, sanitation and hand washing with soap can reduce episodes of diarrhea by 21, 37.5 and 35 percent respectively. Additional improvement of drinking water quality, such as point of use water disinfection, could lead to a reduction of diarrhea episodes of 45 percent.

4. Nutrition: Early and exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months and continued breastfeeding and good nutrition during episodes of diarrhea are critical. Vitamin A supplementation can reduce diarrhea-related mortality by 28 percent in children 6 months to 5 years.

How Can a Corporation Help?

- **Infrastructure, Product Development & Service Delivery:** ensure that quality, affordable products to prevent and treat diarrhea are manufactured and distributed to at-risk communities, especially rotavirus vaccines, ORS

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4 Diarrhea kills 140,000 children in India every year; one child every 4 minutes



5 India's 7.5 million low birth weight babies are extremely vulnerable to diarrhea



7 Unsafe water, poor sanitation and hygiene contribute to 88% of diarrheal deaths

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and zinc, soap and clean water and that health workers are trained to use them.

- **Advocacy, Awareness, Education and Behavior Change:** support campaigns to increase awareness of the benefits of vaccination, the dangers of diarrhea and the importance of rehydration and continued feeding.
- **Innovation:** provide funding and/or technical assistance to experiment with innovative approaches (e.g. new product formulations, integrated delivery of the rotavirus vaccine with antibiotic treatment, nutrition and hygiene at the community level).



announced it would sell the vaccine at a price of \$US1.00 per dose (\$US3.00 course), an extremely competitive price relative to other rotavirus vaccines.

“SHAKTI ORS”

In 2011, pharmaceutical company Pharmasynth joined forces with Hindustan Unilever’s network of “Shakti” entrepreneurs to sell ORS and zinc to 400 rural villages in three districts of Uttar Pradesh. This partnership increased Pharmasynth’s access to rural retail outlets and the incomes of the Shakti entrepreneurs. 8,500 litres of ORS were sold and generated positive net returns of 8 percent for Pharmasynth and 8 percent of the total income of the 187 Shakti entrepreneurs during the high diarrhea months. Further, the association with ORS enhanced the status of the Shakti entrepreneurs in the villages.

“DAZT PROJECT”

Pharmaceutical companies, Utopia, Prayas and Manstar partnered with ten local non-government organizations to increase sales of ORS and zinc in six districts of Gujarat and twelve districts of Uttar Pradesh, working closely with Rural Medical Practitioners (RMPs) who are the main sources of treatment for the majority of sick children in these areas. In

2013, the project sold its 2 millionth sachet of ORS and its 1.5 millionth zinc treatment! Other partners include FHI-360 and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

SANKALP: NO CHILD SHOULD DIE FROM DIARRHEA”

In 2012, Infosys, Teck Resources, IKEA Foundation and several other companies joined forces with the United Nations, governments and non-government organizations to reduce child diarrhea deaths in India. Major commitments made under the public-private partnership include IKEA Foundation’s \$US28 million* to the Clinton Health Access Initiative, Teck Resources’ \$US5 million investment to UNICEF as part of the [“Zinc Alliance for Child Health”](#), McCann Health’s [Zinc+ORS Campaign](#), and the International Zinc Association’s \$US0.5 million commitment as part of the [“Mining Compact for Child Health”](#). All of these investments are to increase access to ORS and zinc treatment for diarrhea in the states with the highest burdens of child diarrhea deaths including Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat.

*Kenya is also included in this program

Next Steps

If your company is interested in supporting an existing program, in establishing a new initiative or forming a new partnership with other stakeholders to prevent child deaths from diarrhea, please contact Shuma Panse at spanse@gbchealth.org or Rahul Bhargava at rbhargava@mdghealthenvoy.org.

Examples of Corporate Support

Corporations who have stepped up to fight diarrhea include India’s leading vaccine manufacturers, consumer goods companies, pharmaceutical companies, technology companies and professional associations. The following are several of the leading, best practice examples of corporate engagement to prevent child deaths from diarrhea:

“ROTAVAC VACCINE”

Leading Indian vaccine maker, Bharat Biotech, has developed a rotavirus vaccine called ROTAVAC® which has shown a 56 percent reduction of severe rotavirus diarrhea in children under one year of age and continued efficacy in the second year of life. The efficacy of ROTAVAC® is comparable to currently licensed rotavirus vaccines but Bharat Biotech



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