

SUZY

N E W S

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Newsletter of the Scaling Up Zinc for Young children with diarrhoea in Bangladesh (SUZY) Project



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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers;

Welcome to the last issue of SUZY News.

This newsletter is intended to keep interested people informed of activities and events surrounding the scale up of zinc as a treatment for diarrhoea for young children in Bangladesh and the research that accompanies and supports this process. The SUZY News also keeps you updated about the benefits of zinc treatment among the under-five children with diarrhoea.

www.icddrb.org/activity/SUZY

The scaling up activities have progressed a lot since the last issue of SUZY News. The Baby Zinc mass media campaign is going full swing. Besides the regular promotional tools including television spots, radio jingles, press advertisements and articles, posters, stickers, billboards, and branding of buses, launches and rickshaws, the project has also launched a nationwide school campaign through magic shows, a new radio programme, a widely distributed television drama and a health show.

As a result of recommendations from the Technical Interest Group of SUZY, the project increased its collaboration with NGOs to make them aware of the benefit of using zinc along with oral rehydration solution (ORS) for diarrhoea treatment of under-five children. In Bangladesh, NGOs provide healthcare to many communities through their own healthcare facilities. There are other NGOs which maintain networks with

the unlicensed healthcare providers like village doctors and drug sellers by providing them training and support on health related issues. The project also increased its promotional campaign in hard-to-reach areas and the areas in which diarrhoea prevalence is highest.

The project has also conducted training for rural medical practitioners (RMPs) and so far has trained nearly 6000 individuals. The informed providers are critical conduits for reducing the gap between awareness on use of zinc and actual use in the rural areas.

As this is the final SUZY News, this issue highlights the journey of SUZY to bring this lifesaving and cost-effective solution to the doorsteps of the poor people, with the potential to save an estimated 50,000 lives of children every year. We thank the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for the great support. The Gates Foundation gave the project life and allowed successful scaling up activities to run for five years.

Knowledge for Global Lifesaving Solutions

This issue also includes a report on the childhood diarrhoea management practices of village doctors based on in-depth interviews taken by SUZY research team and some highlights from the experience of the media partner of SUZY Project, Dhansiri Media Production House, on the Baby Zinc communications campaign.

I hope you will enjoy reading this issue.

Editor, SUZY News

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Scaling Up Zinc for Young children with Diarrhoea: a lifesaving journey

The Scaling Up Zinc for Young Children with Diarrhoea (SUZY) project started its journey with the aim of implementing a zinc treatment scheme for Bangladesh that will reach all children, but most importantly those in greatest need—the poor and undernourished.

Diarrhoea is still a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in developing countries. Every year nearly 2 million children die from diarrhoea in these countries. Research has shown that zinc provides a very effective treatment for diarrhoea among under-five children and can save a child's life, both as a treatment for diarrhoeal illness and by preventing future infectious illnesses.

2002 for funding of the scaling up activities, receiving the fund in June 2003.

A dedicated team started the process of scaling up zinc in Bangladesh to allow all children under five in Bangladesh to benefit from zinc treatment, which is estimated to potentially save around 50,000 children's lives here.

For successful implementation of the activities the project has worked closely with some significant partners, including the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), especially the Directorate of Health Services wing of the ministry, The ACME Laboratories Limited as the production partner and

from Nutriset came to check the quality of zinc dispersible tablet produced by ACME and finally the zinc dispersible tablets under the brand name 'Baby Zinc' were launched on 23 November 2006 as a unique formulation that can be identified as a diarrhoea medication.

As zinc is a new product in treatment of childhood diarrhoea, it needed to be very well-marketed to ensure a nationwide scale up. A large scale formative research project was completed to provide the critical information required for a successful marketing campaign. The SUZY project launched a mass media campaign for its promotion targeting two groups—caretakers and care providers. With respect to the former, the SUZY project designed the messages tailored to reach the relatively lower-income population, which represents 70-80% of the total population in Bangladesh.

Promotion of zinc among providers has been tailored to reach different target groups, beginning with licenced allopaths (MBBS degree), lower-level trained health providers, and then the unlicensed providers who serve the large majority of the poor.

The campaign contains four key messages:

- Baby Zinc for treatment and prevention of diarrhoea
- Use in conjunction with ORS
- 10 tablets, 1 tablet each for 10 consecutive days and
- The zinc tablet dissolves in a spoonful of water.

The communication materials for promotion of zinc treatment for under-five children with diarrhoea are television and radio commercials, press advertisements, articles, billboards, posters, stickers, sign boards, wall paintings and branded buses, launches, rickshaws, tinplate and hand fans.

To disseminate the message of treating diarrhoea with zinc in conjunction with ORS among people of all socio-economic and education strata across the country, traditional cultural shows like folk songs, magic ▶

BABY ZINC

Baby Zinc is a well-tolerated medicine for children that has a vanilla taste. Containing 20mg zinc sulphate, this dispersible tablet is used for the treatment of diarrhoea for children aged six months to five years. It should be given as soon as diarrhoea starts, in conjunction with ORS. The dose is one tablet, once daily for 10 consecutive days.

The tablets quickly become syrup with the addition of a few drops of water.

The SUZY project is promoting dispersible tablets rather than bottled zinc syrup for several reasons. It is less costly, lightweight, easy to distribute and easier to monitor how many doses have been given.



After many years of research, ICDDR,B decided that the effectiveness and benefits of zinc as a treatment for childhood diarrhoea have been sufficiently proven and it was time to move to the next step—to make zinc available as a treatment to the population.

ICDDR,B as the implementing and coordinating agency of the Scaling Up Zinc Treatment for Young children with diarrhoea (SUZY) Project, conducted clinical trials regarding the use of zinc over several years and based on the promising results of these trials, submitted a project proposal to The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in

Dhansiri Media Production House as the media partner.

To make this treatment cost-effective and locally produced, ICDDR,B planned to purchase the patent licence of the formulation of dispersible tablets containing 20mg zinc sulphate from Nutriset (France) for Bangladesh and subcontracted the technology to a local drug producer. ICDDR,B signed a sub-licence agreement with Nutriset for the patent rights to their dispersible zinc premix in Bangladesh. Eventually, a subcontract was signed between ICDDR,B and The ACME Laboratories Limited for receipt of technology transfer from Nutriset. A delegation

programmes and courtyard meetings have also been conducted.

Realizing the importance of electronic media as the swiftest medium for circulating the benefit of zinc treatment to every corner of the country, special emphasis has been given on its use. The campaign produced and aired a 13-episode television drama serial, a 13-episode health show and a 24-episode radio drama.

Through the project's lifetime, ICDDR,B and its partners have worked closely to establish an innovative distribution system for the zinc tablets. This involves partners in NGOs, the MoHFW and the private sector. Training manuals and videos have been developed. Not only for the care providers, training was also conducted for those involved in the distribution process.

Zinc tablets are now available at the public sector health facilities via the MoHFW. ICDDR,B has provided the Ministry facilities with the zinc blister packs free of charge. The project has also provided orientation on this treatment to the public sector health managers of district and sub-district levels all over the country who will disseminate information on zinc treatment to other physicians and care providers through coordination meetings.

For the successful implementation of zinc administration along with ORS nationwide, SUZY Project worked closely with both the licenced and unlicensed healthcare providers from public, private and NGO sectors.

The project has organized a series of workshops and seminars with the leading academics and paediatricians of the country and orientation sessions in all public medical colleges.

SUZY training team has trained nearly 6000 village doctors covering all upazilas (sub-district), who will in turn disseminate the information among their fellow colleagues.

The SUZY Project has been continuously monitoring the impact of zinc treatment to find out the intended and unintended consequences in Bangladesh through nationally representative surveys in rural, municipal and large city corporation sites. ■

Scaling up zinc treatment for childhood diarrhoea through NGO sector

Other than public sector, a large majority of the population in Bangladesh relies significantly on other service sources, such as NGO (non-government organization) provided health services and on unlicensed private practitioners. In Bangladesh, health seeking for childhood diarrhoea is dominated by utilization of private sector providers. Unlicensed providers (village doctors and drug sellers) and homeopaths comprise more than 90% of the preferred source of care when help is sought. To reap the maximum advantage of zinc scale up programme, it is essential to incorporate those sources in zinc promotion as well. A study has been carried out in a rural community in Sreepur upazila (sub-district) under Gazipur district, where both Dustho Sasthya Kendra (DSK), a partner NGO of Plan International and Ganosasthyo Kendra (GK) provide primary healthcare services along with other programmes. Both the NGOs are benefiting from strong and sustained NGO-private sector collaboration in delivering service

in the community. The objective of the study was particularly to bring the use of zinc in the treatment of childhood diarrhea in the community involving NGO sector. It is hoped that such collaboration will maximize zinc treatment coverage for acute childhood diarrhoea.

This study assessed the effectiveness of the zinc scale up programme and the impact of a zinc scale up intervention package that needs strong and sustained NGO-private sector collaboration. The study design was a controlled before-after (CAB) exploring the possibilities of scaling up zinc in the community served by Dustho Sasthya Kendra (DSK), against a comparable area served by Ganosasthyo Kendra (GK).

The intervention included orientation/training of the unlicensed healthcare providers regarding zinc treatment in childhood diarrhoea through NGO healthcare providers. In addition, intervening NGO sensitized community regarding zinc usage in childhood diarrhoea through their usual activities. ▶



An unlicensed healthcare provider

Through two community surveys and in-depth interviews with village doctors and drug sellers, the study evaluated the effect of the zinc scale up intervention on the zinc prescription and on antibiotics in treatment of childhood diarrhoea in order to determine the value-added by scaling up specifically with NGO providers in addition to the existing nation-wide programmes.

Survey findings show that, about 74% (n=612) of the children in the intervention area and 78% (n=630) in the control area sought treatment from any provider at baseline. During endline survey, 67% (n=612) of the children in the intervention area and 58% (n=650) in the control area sought treatment from any provider.

About 70% of the children received ORS in the intervention (74.5% Vs. 72.2% in baseline and endline respectively) and control (73.1% Vs. 65% in baseline and endline respectively) areas.

The use of any form of zinc for diarrhoea was 22% and 24% respectively in the intervention and control areas during baseline assessment. After six months of intervention, the prevalence of zinc use in the control area was decreased by 9% while in the intervention area zinc usage was increased by 8%, which is statistically significant.

In compliance with the recommended duration of zinc treatment, among the zinc tablet treatment users the use of 10 days treatment increased in the intervention area by 18% (15.3% Vs. 33.3%) while in the control area the 10-day course increased only 5% (14.1% Vs. 19.2%). Following intervention, antibiotic usage did not decline among the zinc users and non-zinc users.

Conclusion: The study results show that, a simple inexpensive training intervention for the unlicensed healthcare providers through NGO network increases the use of zinc for diarrhoea management. These efforts therefore need to continue with non-sector (partnership of NGOs and private healthcare providers) providers for successful nationwide zinc scaling up. ■

Baby Zinc mass media campaign: Dhansiri's experience

In line with SUZY Project's scaling up activities, Dhansiri launched the Baby Zinc mass media campaign to spread the message on benefits of zinc along with oral saline to fight against childhood diarrhoea, which is a leading cause of child death in Bangladesh. Dhansiri designed the communication strategies for its nationwide campaign that would be of Baby Zinc to bring about the desired goal of scaling up zinc and reaching as many people in Bangladesh as possible, especially the poor.

Understanding of the community—their beliefs, culture, language and practices—through formative research added value and gave us an edge. Results from the research gave us access points to our target audiences. Dhansiri used multiple channels strategically to sustain interest and generate demand. One of the major decisions that proved effective was addressing the zinc tablets' supply side with communications. Extensive pre-testing ensured proper clarity, acceptability and understanding of the messages.

At Dhansiri, we believe in saving the lives of thousands of children and potential nation builders through communication. Creating a unique tagline, which incorporated a sound icon, brought great success.

One of our sweet memories states that some of the local doctors prescribed Baby Zinc along with the tagline used in the mass communication campaign; that is 'Cring..Cring..Baby Zinc'. Success speaks for itself. After initial feedback and review, the tagline was changed slightly addressing that there might be misconceptions to whether Baby Zinc is a substitute for ORS (oral rehydration solution). So the tagline was revised with the information that Baby Zinc should be taken along with oral saline.

Baby Zinc communication has been strategically placed in the media. An evaluation was done after initial release that showed an almost 95% product awareness in urban and semi-urban locations, with 50% in rural areas, primarily from television. ▶





Popular TV artists Chanchal Chowdhury and Badhon in the drama *Bhalo Achhi Bhalo Theko*

Photo: Dhansiri Media

Dhansiri created five commercials for television viewers and one for radio audiences, catering to their different needs. Different printed materials were developed with customized messages to cater to the audiences from both the demand and supply ends.

Some interesting anecdotes can be recalled which took place during some of our below-the-line (BTL) activities (a promotional technique which mainly focuses on direct means of communication aiming at the target population), such as courtyard meeting, folk song shows, magic shows.

Courtyard meetings were a BTL activity employed to address hard-to-reach areas of Bangladesh. Approximately 600 courtyard meetings were conducted successfully and on each of the occasions about thirty women and men attended the show with their children.

One of our creative BTL activities incorporated a magic show at school level all over the country. The magic show is an interesting event for all, especially for the rural kids, and a great success nationwide with approximately 150,000 students and mothers in attendance to date.

The show included several magic demonstrations along with the messages of Baby Zinc, mainly about dosage, procedures for preparing and feeding zinc dispersible tablets and age limits. To ensure complete understanding of the Baby Zinc education, a question and answer session was arranged at the end of each show. The winning participants were awarded with a Baby Zinc puzzle.

Managing Director of Dhansiri Media Ms Shomi Kaiser made a presentation on the Bangladesh experience of zinc campaign for childhood diarrhoea titled 'Baby Zinc communications campaign at national level' at a meeting of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation at Seattle, USA on 26 March 2008. The meeting was on using pay-for-performance methods to reinvigorate diarrhoeal disease control programmes.

The Baby Zinc slogan, 'Cring... Cring...Baby Zinc' has become very popular and sustains the growth of zinc use via word-of-mouth. People learned that Baby Zinc is a treatment for diarrhoea. Dhansiri also produced a television drama and TV health show on zinc treatment.

The 13-episode weekly drama serial, titled *Bhalo Achhi Bhalo Theko*, was aired on Bangladesh government television BTB. Set in a rural context, the drama was full of humour and entertainment while carrying messages on the use of zinc along with ORS for the treatment of diarrhoea among children aged from 6 months to 5 years. Written by famous Bangladeshi writer Anisul Haque, the drama was directed by renowned TV actor and director Abul Hayat. Popular artists Chanchal Chowdhury, Badhon, Shahiduzzaman Selim, Ejazul Islam and Challenger played major roles in the drama. The shooting of the drama was full of fun and it was well-received by Bangladeshi audience.

Behavioural change is also one of our major challenges. After successfully overcoming challenges in awareness and education, we can say that we are at the edge of bringing our audience's knowledge into practice. Thus the need for continuing communication arises to keep reminding the people of Bangladesh. Continuous reinforcement of the messages will bring about greater behavioural change. ■