

POUZN Tanzania: Using a Multi-Sector Approach to Promote Zinc and Oral Rehydration Therapy

The Point-Of-Use Water Disinfection and Zinc Treatment (POUZN) project is a USAID Private Sector Program (PSP) initiative managed by AED. POUZN supports the use of zinc treatment with oral rehydration therapy (ORT)/oral rehydration solution (ORS) to reduce morbidity and mortality due to diarrhea. The project goal is to ensure the long-term and sustainable availability, sales, and use of zinc treatment and ORT by enlisting the commercial sector to complement public sector efforts in promoting these treatments. In 2004, a national survey estimated that on average, every Tanzanian child suffers between three and four cases of diarrhea every year. Diarrhea is one of the leading causes of death in children under five.

Engaging in Advocacy

POUZN created an enabling environment for zinc treatment through advocacy with the public sector. POUZN and other key actors in the public and NGO sectors worked together through the Tanzanian Zinc Task Force (ZTF). The ZTF influenced Tanzania's Medical Stores Department (MSD), which procures all public sector medical supplies, to change its specifications to the new low-osmolarity ORS ("lo-ORS"). This action resulted in all ORS producers switching to the new lo-ORS formulation for both public and private sector products.

The Tanzanian Ministry of Health (MoH) guidelines for the integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI), on which many health professionals rely for guidance, were revised in consultation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and POUZN to include zinc treatment. ZTF support also led to a UNICEF donation of 1.2 million zinc treatment courses to MSD, which was a key step in the provision of zinc treatment to public health posts. Additional advocacy is needed to develop a plan for MSD distribution of zinc treatment. The ZTF is also leading advocacy efforts to ensure that zinc treatment will be listed as an "over-the-counter" (OTC) product in 2009.

Creating Product Supply



In March 2006, POUZN completed an assessment of the Tanzania market and identified appropriate pharmaceutical partners based on their long-term interest in zinc and their research and development, manufacturing, marketing, export, and distribution capabilities. Following the assessment, Shelys Pharmaceuticals, an AED partner in the Tanzania Marketing and Communications for HIV/AIDS, Reproductive Health and Child Survival (T-MARC) Project, agreed to produce and market a zinc dispersible tablet.

Shelys agreed to partner with POUZN because of its desire to be the first African supplier of zinc treatment, and because of POUZN's offer of technical assistance in attaining WHO Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) certification for zinc treatment, a step that would facilitate WHO GMP certification of other products. For this activity, United States Pharmacopoeia (USP) was enlisted to recommend quality control improvements. Since the beginning of April 2007, 168,000 courses of zinc have been sold.

POUZN also collaborated with Zenufa Pharmaceuticals to develop two forms of zinc treatment, a dispersible tablet and a syrup product, which the company expects to launch in 2009. Offering both

tablets and syrups will allow consumers to choose the product type that best fits their needs and preferences.



Increasing Demand

As a first step, POUZN trained Shelys medical representatives on improved diarrhea management, which is defined as using ORT and zinc treatment, and only using antibiotics when necessary. POUZN developed a presentation for professional societies and for Shelys medical representatives to use in meetings with health professionals.

POUZN leveraged T-MARC's trade activation program to increase drug seller knowledge and make zinc treatment more available. These activations typically involve placement of promotional materials in wholesale and retail outlets, delivery of initial product stocks, and most importantly, motivating retailers to sell the product. POUZN also used an existing program run by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) and the Tanzanian Food and Drug Administration to upgrade drug seller skills. The Accredited Drug Dispensing Outlet (ADDO) program trains drug sellers on a range of common illnesses. A training module on improved diarrhea management was implemented and is increasing zinc sales in ADDO regions.

POUZN is creating a radio advertisement that is expected to air in 2009, and is encouraging community based organizations (CBOs) in regions with a high incidence of diarrhea to introduce zinc treatment via their existing programs. A phased expansion program is also being introduced in Morogoro that targets consumers directly with information on improved diarrhea management. POUZN's public sector and private sector combined total distribution will be 2 million annually by the project's end.

POUZN's vision is widespread availability of zinc with 85% of pharmacies and 70% of both ADDOs, and 10% of duka la dawas by the end of year three of sales. Commercial sector demand will be 500,000 treatment courses and the public sector will be fully-engaged in distributing zinc treatment to public health posts. This demand for zinc treatment will complement the approximately 500,000 ORS sachets sold in the Tanzanian private sector in 2010 alone.

Implementation Challenges

Shelys faced significant challenges in achieving targets for commercial sector demand. These sales are tied to public sector demand because many health professionals work in both the public and private sectors and expect government endorsement prior to using a new treatment. The MoH has only recently begun to send the revised guidelines to health workers. Finally, a lack of zinc supply coming through the public health system (via the MSD) has made health providers skeptical of the value of the product. The positive strides made by POUZN thus far, however, suggest that these challenges can be surmounted with additional investments in advocacy and education of health professionals, government members and the general public.

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