

Increasing the Use of ORS and Zinc through the Private Sector

Background

In Kenya, diarrhea is the second leading cause of sickness and death in children under 5, contributing to 9 percent of deaths (Countdown to 2015 Report, 2012). Childhood mortality can be reduced by increasing public awareness and use of ORS and zinc to manage diarrhea in children under 5. When these medicines are used together, the results are lifesaving. Diarrhea treatment is a critical focus also for achieving global targets for human development, including Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths and Sustainable Development Goals.

Other contributing factors to the scourge of diarrhea include: limited access to clean water, poor sanitation, and barriers to receiving appropriate healthcare services, particularly for vulnerable groups—all challenges in Kenya. Diarrheal disease is especially prevalent in the southeastern Coast region.

Oral Rehydration Solution and Zinc:

A Global Best Practice

In 2004, WHO and UNICEF revised the recommendation for the treatment of childhood diarrhea. They specified *low osmolarity oral rehydration solution (ORS)* to treat dehydration, together with 10 or 20 mg of zinc for 10 days, to decrease the duration and severity of diarrhea by up to 25 percent. Zinc is associated with a 40 percent reduction in treatment failure and death, in persistent diarrhea. Antimicrobials were to be administered only for complicated diarrhea.

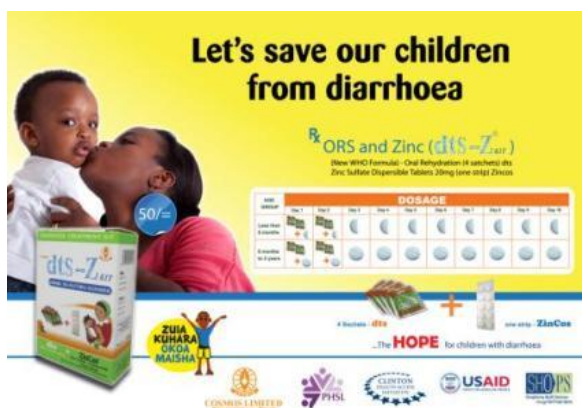
This clear statement became part of Ministry of Health recommendations around the globe. It gave each country the platform to recommend ORS and zinc for diarrhea management at a national policy level. ORS and zinc treatment could be included on the country's Essential Medicine List. Since 2011, the Strengthening Health Outcomes through the Private Sector



(SHOPS) project has conducted research and pilot interventions to support this treatment approach.

Introducing co-packs (ORS and zinc) through private sector channels

In April 2011, USAID Kenya invited SHOPS to conduct a Total Market Assessment of diarrhea management practices. The assessment focused on identifying opportunities available through the private health sector, to increase access to and use of the recommended diarrhea treatment (ORS and zinc) by caregivers of children under 5.



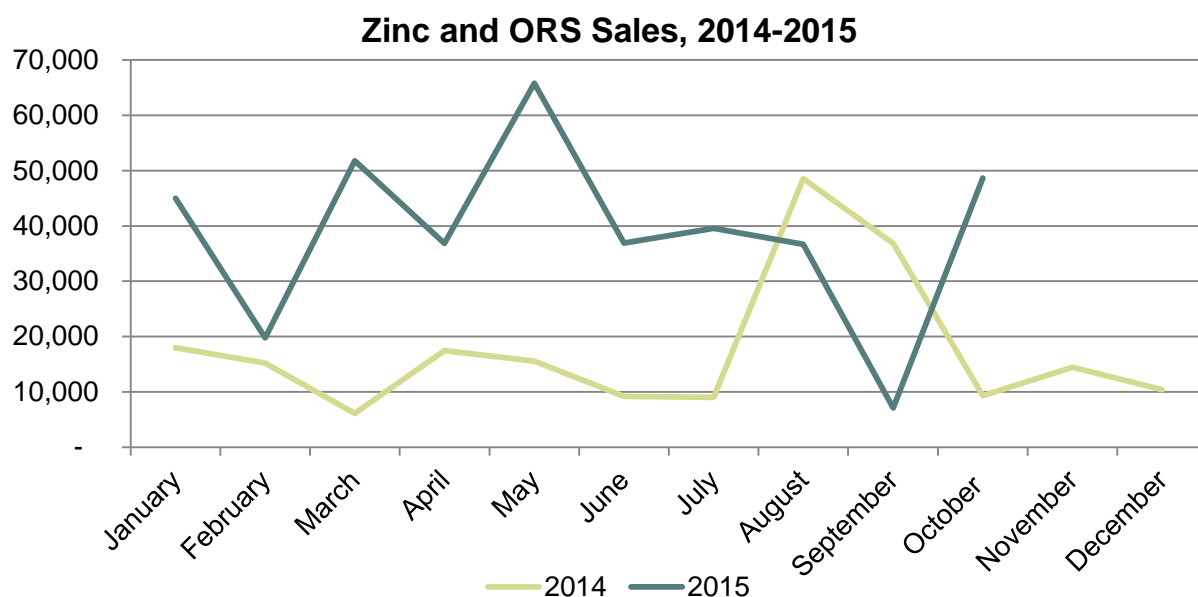
Scale-up Strategy for Essential Treatments in Children Under Five Years in Kenya is a plan to scale up education efforts to achieve more widespread use of ORS and zinc. The plan is implemented by a consortium of partners, coordinated by a technical working group that

includes the Kenyan Ministry of Health, Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), SHOPS, and Population Services International. The working group developed a retail product—**co-packs of ORS and zinc**—by working with a local manufacturer, Cosmos Pharmaceuticals. The product **DTS-Z** was distributed by COSMOS and a local pharmaceutical distributor, Philips Health Care. SHOPS led interventions to increase both the supply and the demand for the co-packs in the private sector market.

The marketing efforts targeted caregivers of children under 5 as well as retail outlets, chemists, and clinicians in private practice, using printed (generic) marketing materials and electronic media (radio and TV advertisements). These educational materials provided detailed information to caregivers on life-saving treatments for diarrhea; they also specified locations where products could be purchased in their community.

SHOPS also worked closely with Cosmos to design and produce marketing materials for their branded co-pack, DTS-Z, targeting both providers and consumers. The project supported training for field representatives (from Cosmos, Philips, and PSI), who visited pharmacies, providers and private drug shop outlets to educate on the benefits of using ORS and zinc to manage childhood diarrhea.

SHOPS partnered with professional associations including the National Nurses Association of Kenya, the Kenya Clinical Officers Association, the Pharmaceutical Society of Kenya, the Kenya Pharmaceutical Association, the Kenya Pediatric Association, and the Kenya Medical Women's Association. These educational efforts allowed SHOPS to identify and build professional champions, who could promote ORS and zinc to nurses and clinical officers in private clinics. Working with an extensive group of major private sector partners helped them to leverage their resources, improved collaboration efforts, and strengthened key relationships.



Co-Pack Sales Data

Through the demand creation activities supported by SHOPS, Cosmos and Phillips were able to effectively sell ORS and zinc co-packs through the private sector. Total annual sales (January–August) amounted to 209,940 co-packs in 2014 (equivalent to 2,099,400 units of zinc) and 381,330 co-packs in 2015 (equivalent to 3,813,300 units of zinc).

Accomplishments and Lessons Learned

In just over three years, with limited resources, the SHOPS Kenya team led a multipronged approach to increase availability of ORS and zinc, by partnering with local manufacturers and suppliers to reach health providers and retailers and by raising awareness with demand-generating activities to reach caregivers. The project noted several accomplishments and lessons learned:

- **Improved access to, affordability, and availability of ORS and zinc products:** SHOPS contributed to increasing availability in the private sector through training of retailers and small-scale health clinics. A retail audit supported by CHAI showed that the co-pack availability went from 9 percent to 37 percent of pharmacies and retail outlets in one year. To increase demand,

SHOPS aired generic and branded targeted radio and TV ads. These media campaigns were run to coincide with the rainy periods. The ads aired for one month each in November 2014 on one national TV station and in March 2015 on two TV stations and five radio stations.

- **Improved knowledge of quality health services and delivery:** SHOPS sponsored activities to increase knowledge of the MOH’s recommendation to use ORS and zinc for diarrhea treatment in children under 5. SHOPS used detailing, Continuous Medical Education and presentations at professional association meetings to raise awareness among providers and retailers. The retail audit for these demand-generation activities found that knowledge of MOH recommendation was 74 percent at pharmacies, 19 percent at dukas, and 17 percent at kiosks.
- **Enhanced awareness through behavior change communication:** SHOPS targeted caregivers of children under 5 with messages on availability of the co-pack in the private sector, using mass media and community activities. This created informed demand to “pull” the co-pack from pharmacies and retail outlets. SHOPS

supported a targeted outreach campaign to help increase awareness and availability in non-pharma outlets.

- **Strengthened Strategic Partnerships:** SHOPS continued to engage with the National Nurses Association of Kenya, the Clinical Officers Association, and Pharmaceutical Society of Kenya by sponsoring annual general meetings to increase education on ORS and zinc as the first-line treatment for pediatric diarrhea.

For more information about the SHOPS project, visit: www.shopsproject.org



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