

ZINC SAVES KIDS IN NEPAL - FIRST YEAR RESULTS

"Zinc is very important for the overall development of a child. In Nepal, we have been promoting the use of zinc through micronutrient powder (MNP) and we are supporting the Government in conducting pilot projects in six districts. In Nepal 41% of children are stunted and 11% are severely undernourished; we see a big opportunity to improve the severe malnutrition condition of children," said Will Parks, Deputy Representative, UNICEF Nepal.



"Although Nepal is already on track to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 4 aimed at reducing under five child mortality, it is sad that diarrhea is still the second leading cause of deaths in this age group," continued Will Parks. "Zinc not only helps in reducing the duration of diarrhea but also helps in controlling future episodes. It is critical that we increase the coverage and awareness level of zinc usage in every community to ensure good overall development. We are very grateful to IZA for their support in this effort."

In its first-year report, UNICEF highlights the progress that has been made with zinc supplementation activities supported by the IZA Zinc Saves Kids initiative.

General malnutrition continues to be a major problem with almost 50% of Nepal's children suffering from chronic malnutrition. In addition almost 50% of the under-five population and approximately 75% of the under-two population suffer from iron-deficiency anemia which indicates that children also lack zinc.

The Nepalese Government is committed to making micronutrient powder supplementation, including zinc, a central component of the national nutrition plan and to link it with their Infant and Young Child Feeding program. This program increases mothers' knowledge of key infant feeding and care practices to ensure that more than 80% of children under two consume micronutrient powder appropriately.

Zinc Saves Kids-UNICEF contributions have supported the Nepalese Government to roll out six pilot projects involving almost 100,000 children aged six-23 months. By February 2011 the first round of 60 sachets of micronutrient supplements was distributed to 25,000 children in Makwanpur, Palpa, Rasuwa and Gorkha. Extensive training was provided to health professionals and female community health volunteers who are the primary agents interacting with the mothers. In 2012,

micronutrient supplementation will be expanded to 15 districts with the remaining 60 districts covered in 2014. The EU Commission is also a partner in this project.



Good progress was also seen in the use of zinc supplementation for the treatment of diarrhea in Banke, one of the Zinc Saves Kids-UNICEF supported areas. Health Management Information System data for 2010/11 reveals district coverage of the use of zinc and oral rehydration salts at 74%. 92% of cases were prescribed zinc along with oral rehydration salts. Full compliance of zinc treatment

(giving 10 tablets for 10 days) during an episode of diarrhea was reported at 66.8%. Among the mothers who did not give the full dose, 74% reported stopping the zinc tablets because the diarrhea stopped after a few days of zinc intake. Under Zinc Saves Kids, UNICEF will continue to support the Government's efforts aimed at increasing the awareness of the importance of zinc tablets in the treatment of diarrhea and strengthen supply and logistics management to prevent shortages and ensure timely and adequate supplies of zinc. In 2010 two million zinc tablets were procured through UNICEF's central supply division.