

Govt's diarrhoea control program gets support from leading NGO, Industry

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'IDF 2015' is the campaign that aims at reducing child mortality rates in India; one of the prime goals of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). By August 8th, this initiative of the National Health Mission aims to conduct intensified activities for control of deaths due to diarrhoea across all States and Union Territories.

The strategy is to utilize advocacy and awareness raising activities, distribution of ORS-Zinc and promotion of Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) activities. The aim is to empower communities by improving their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and practices to prevent diarrhoea.

One of the prominent NGOs, Save the Children will work with the Department of Health and Family Welfare in their effort through the ground-breaking and ambitious 'Stop Diarrhoea' programme. Supported by RB, the programme, for the first time will fully implement the internationally recognized 7-point plan to ensure comprehensive diarrhoea prevention, treatment and control across 4 key states - Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and West Bengal. The 'Stop Diarrhoea' program combines RB's expertise in product development and research, and Save the Children's experience of delivering life-saving work to help save thousands of young lives a year.

As part of the program, the consumer goods company, RB India has also developed two innovative products to improve hand washing and community sanitation. RB will not be making a profit from these products and the revenue will be reinvested into the 'Stop Diarrhoea' program. They will also be produced locally, encouraging entrepreneurship, in addition to reducing the overall carbon footprint and transport costs associated with their manufacture.

The 'Stop Diarrhoea' program will provide facilities such as Zinc-ORS depots and breast feeding corners. In addition, street plays, awareness rallies, home visits for demonstrations on ORS and Zinc usage, pocket meetings with mothers, hand washing demonstrations at Anganwadi Centres and schools will also be conducted to raise awareness around diarrhoea prevention. Meetings to engage with stakeholders like government ministries, development partners and health workers will also be an integral part of the plan.

As per Mr Thomas Chandy, chief executive of Save the Children India, "The IDCF is a great initiative by the government and we need to have more campaigns like this to strengthen the ongoing effort to reduce childhood mortality. It is also important for civil society organizations and corporate sector to work together with the government to mobilise communities and create awareness about diarrhoea. Our 'Stop Diarrhoea' program supported by RB is being reinforced by these intensive activities. We are happy to support the government in eliminating diarrhoea as a public health burden"

Mr Nitish Kapoor, chief executive of RB India, said: "RB has been funding Save the Children programmes in India since 2010 and has been able to see the real difference they have been making to the lives of Indian families. We believe that together RB and Save the Children can make a critical step towards a better understanding of water, hygiene and sanitation, which in turn will help reduce the number of children dying from diarrhoea in India."

Childhood diarrhoea continues to be a major killer among children in India, contributing to 10.4 percent of under five deaths in the country, the highest death rate in the world. Around 1.4 lakhs children die due to diarrhoea annually in the country, and it is estimated that 48 percent of Indian children below the age of five years are stunted, with diarrhoea being one of the main causes.