The partnership

P&G Pampers and UNICEF joined forces in 2006 to fight maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT), a disease virtually unknown in the industrialized world, but a ‘silent killer’ causing mothers and newborn babies in the developing world a most painful death. Through a cause-related marketing campaign under the banner of ‘1 Pack = 1 Vaccine’, Pampers has raised significant funds to help eliminate this disease and raise its public profile, particularly in developed countries.

The challenge

Maternal and neonatal tetanus is a deadly infectious disease responsible for the loss of thousands of women and newborns in developing countries each year. It is caused by tetanus spores in the environment and is completely preventable through maternal immunization with low-cost tetanus toxoid vaccine before or during pregnancy and through hygienic birth practices. Despite the availability of the vaccine for some 80 years, thousands of women and approximately 58,000 newborns continue to die yearly from tetanus, which can be contracted by either mother or child during childbirth. Most of the mothers and newborns dying of tetanus live in Africa and South Asia, generally in areas where women are poor, have little access to health care, and have little information about safe birthing practices.

Once the disease is contracted, the fatality rate can be as high as 100 per cent without hospital care and between 10 per cent and 60 per cent with hospital care. The true extent of the tetanus death toll is not known, as many newborns and mothers die at home and neither the birth nor the death is reported.

UNICEF and Pampers, together with other partners, aim to remove the threat of MNT, which still endangers the lives of over 100 million women and their newborn babies in the 34 countries across the globe where it has not yet been eliminated.
Background

The World Health Assembly first called for the elimination of neonatal tetanus in 1989, prompting the launch of the Neonatal Tetanus Elimination Initiative. In 1999, the goal was expanded to include the elimination of maternal tetanus, and the initiative was accordingly relaunched by UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA as the Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus Elimination (MNTE) Initiative. With UNICEF coordinating implementation since then, the initiative engages national governments, donors, civil society and the private sector in combined efforts to decrease the rate of neonatal tetanus incidence to less than one case per 1,000 live births yearly in all districts in all countries by 2015. Specifically, the relaunch focused on the 57 countries that had not eliminated MNT by 1999.¹

Participants in the MNTE initiative, besides UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA and P&G Pampers, include Becton, Dickinson and Company (BD), the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the GAVI Alliance, Immunisation Basics, the Government of Japan, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Kiwanis International, PATH, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Save the Children and USAID, as well as UNICEF national committees and governments throughout the world.

1 Pack = 1 Vaccine

The UNICEF-Pampers ‘1 Pack = 1 Vaccine’ partnership in support of the MNTE initiative began in the United Kingdom as a Christmas holiday marketing campaign in 2006. The success and simplicity of that campaign led Pampers and UNICEF to expand it in 2007 to more than a dozen countries in Western Europe and ultimately to sign, in 2008, a global agreement that runs in about 60 countries worldwide.

Although it has evolved over the years, at its simplest, the ‘1 Pack = 1 Vaccine’ cause-marketing campaign functions as it has from the beginning: For a limited time every year, for every specially marked Pampers’ pack of diapers and wipes sold, Pampers donates US$.07 to UNICEF to help fund or deliver one dose of tetanus toxoid vaccine.

Within the partnership, UNICEF advocates for MNT issues at global and national levels, helping the governments of developing countries build technically sound plans to achieve and sustain MNT elimination and cooperating with them to implement those plans. UNICEF also supports the procurement and delivery of vaccines, maintenance of cold chain systems to protect the vaccines from excessive exposure to heat, the training of health workers and the development of communication and social mobilization plans.

In addition to the UNICEF-Pampers partnership, for nearly 20 years, P&G has supported UNICEF through national-level partnerships between local P&G offices and UNICEF country offices and national committees.

¹ In 2009, there were 57 countries that had still not eliminated MNT. The figure today stands at 59 with inclusion of Timor Leste in 2002 and South Sudan in 2011.
Activities

Over the years, the campaign has expanded beyond per-pack donations to an integrated approach involving internal and external communication and employee, customer and celebrity engagement, which serve to increase awareness of MNT, drive additional sales and provide a platform for deeper engagement for key stakeholders.

The campaign also aims to create a global movement supporting MNTE by giving mothers in the developed world an opportunity to help protect the lives of mothers and newborns in developing countries in new ways. For instance, through digital platforms such as ‘1 Read = 1 Vaccine’, in 2011 mothers were able to create personalized online storybooks. For every story read, Pampers donated one dose of vaccine. Mothers are also able to support UNICEF directly through online donations, as well as to engage in a strong social networking movement.

Pampers has also called upon sister P&G brands to join the MNTE effort. Since 2008, Ariel, Dash, Fairy, Febreze, Lenor and others have been participating in the campaign and contributing to the fundraising and communication effort. In addition, interested international and national retailers are also taking part through in-store activities.

In 2010, P&G set up a sabbatical programme that offers eligible employees three months of paid leave to work in UNICEF country offices, allowing both partners to benefit from the exchange of expertise and relevant skill sets.

For its part, UNICEF put a dedicated team of programme, fundraising and communication specialists in place to lead the implementation of the global partnership. Activities include providing technical inputs such as in the development of campaign materials; coordination with national committees and UNICEF offices in countries where the Pampers campaign is being run and with UNICEF offices in countries where the MNTE initiative is being implemented; managing the allocation of funds to recipient countries; monitoring implementation and progress towards MNTE; providing reporting, messaging, human interest stories and other communications; and facilitating field visits for P&G staff, media, celebrities and others.

Results

Since 1999, 25 of the 59 countries that were the focus of the MNTE initiative have eliminated tetanus, and more than 113 million women have been protected against the disease. The estimated annual neonatal tetanus deaths have been reduced from 215,000 in 1999 to 58,000 in 2010.
The partnership with Pampers is credited with helping to eliminate tetanus in seven of the 25 countries that have eliminated MNT since 1999. By 2012, Pampers had donated approximately US$32 million to the cause, facilitating the procurement of 300 million doses of tetanus toxoid vaccine.

The donations have supported vaccination activities in 32 of the 59 priority countries at high risk of MNT. In addition to the seven which WHO has validated as having achieved elimination, another nine have completed activities and are planning to undergo assessments before requesting WHO validation; and seven are expected to complete their MNT vaccination programmes by the end of 2012, which will enable them to claim elimination and undergo the WHO validation process. The remaining countries continue to implement programmes.

Besides funding, the Pampers partnership has given visibility to an invisible and forgotten disease. Millions of consumers have been reached with the message of maternal and neonatal tetanus and how it affects women and their newborn babies in developing countries. Pampers’ marketing expertise has helped UNICEF to simplify a complicated development issue and to bring the issue to the consumer, as well as provide the consumer with opportunities to take action. Pampers is now one of UNICEF’s largest corporate donors. At the same time, Pampers found a cause that resonates strongly with their consumers.

Lessons learned and way forward

The partnership continues to gain momentum with commitments to help meet the MNTE initiative’s funding gap of approximately US$100 million. The initiative is now at a critical stage, however, with 34 countries yet to eliminate the disease and only three years remaining to the 2015 global elimination goal.

According to a recent study prepared by the University of Oxford’s Said Business School and sponsored by the Pears Foundation, the partnership constitutes a new model for cause-related marketing, an innovative way to strengthen mature brands and a major avenue to raise money for important global issues. Among the keys to this success are the power of two global brands coming together with a mutual focus on children; the strong commitment of Pampers’ senior management to making a real difference in women and children’s lives; long-term partnership vision and cooperation; and ongoing creativity, innovation and leveraging of partner networks.

The partnership, as any between two large organizations, is not without its complications. P&G and UNICEF faced challenges stemming from differences in organizational cultures and structures, decision-making processes, priorities and timelines, sources of funding and communication with consumers.

UNICEF and P&G Pampers plan to continue the partnership until global elimination of MNT has been reached in 2015. Crucial to this goal will be an ongoing high level of transparency and trust, strong coordination and communication between the parties.