

SOUTHERN Pulse

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WELCOME

Welcome to the third edition of Southern Pulse, a quarterly newsletter from GHSC-PSM's project offices in Southern Africa. As the world continues to navigate the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic, we have needed to rethink how we work and how we serve our clients. In an environment where essential services and resources are prioritized to combat COVID-19, people must continue to have timely access to essential medicines and other health commodities. The project is on track with its interventions, and we are pleased to report highlights in this edition.

ZAMBIA



PREVENTING HIV INFECTION THROUGH A MULTI-MONTH SUPPLY OF PREP

Jessy Phiri, a 44-year-old mother and wife, travels about 10 minutes from her home to Chitambo District Hospital in Zambia's Central Province for regular counselling and HIV testing.



Jessy collects her PrEP bottles. Photo by Brian Nkhata

While she is HIV negative and continues to remain so, her husband Isaac tested positive in late 2019. Prisca Mulenga, the counsellor at Chitambo District Hospital, began educating Jessy on the advantages of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)—a medicine for people at risk of HIV to prevent getting the virus.

Studies have shown that when taken daily, PrEP is highly effective in preventing HIV infection through sex or injection drug use, with an effectiveness rate of about 99 percent.

Along with regularly using condoms, which Jessy and Isaac get from the hospital, they can prevent any further infection. “My husband and I use condoms each time

we have sex,” Jessy explained. “This is another way I can prevent myself from being infected and getting pregnant.”

“Persevere and adhere to taking your drugs for your own good health.”

Jessy Phiri, PrEP client, Chitambo District Hospital

Thanks to support from the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Global Health Supply Chain Program-Procurement and Supply Management (GHSC-PSM) project has delivered more than 327,000 bottles of PrEP (as of March 2021) to Zambia, making it readily available at health facilities countrywide and accessible to people like Jessy. The project has also procured antiretrovirals, rapid test kits, and laboratory commodities so that people like Isaac can continue to live healthy lives.

Jessy’s latest visit to the hospital resulted in taking home six months’ worth of PrEP, cutting down on the number of visits to the health facility that she has to make. “I am very happy about collecting medicine for six months; I will have more time to do other things,” Jessy said. Testing will now be done every three months to ensure she does not contract the virus.

“My husband and I take our medication at 6 every morning. This is easy for us, as we can remind and encourage each other when we take the medicine together. I would also like to encourage those who are in a similar situation ... to persevere and adhere to taking medication because once you stop, then you are creating a problem for yourself. We thank the American government for making the medication available.”



MALAWI

SAVING LIVES IN MALAWI WITH IMPROVED MALARIA TREATMENT AVAILABILITY: ENHANCING IN-COUNTRY COMMODITY SECURITY USING THE PARALLEL SUPPLY CHAIN

Fanny Mdeba, 24, of Blantyre, had previously failed to receive treatment after being diagnosed with malaria at Zingwangwa Health Centre, but this year, she could get treated. “I felt feverish earlier this year,” she said. “I went to the health center and was relieved to receive medication, upon testing positive for malaria.”

More than 650 public health facilities and service delivery points countrywide in Malawi, including Zingwangwa Health Centre, now consistently receive malaria long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs)—and medication from 2017 through 2021, among health commodities being procured and delivered by the U.S. President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI), through GHSC-PSM.

More than USD\$12,000,000 worth of LLINs have been delivered to Malawi from 2017 through 2021. Since 2017, GHSC-PSM has supported the National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP) under the Malawi Ministry of Health (MOH) through managing a parallel supply chain (PSC) system for warehousing and distribution of PMI-donated commodities using a 3PL provider, Cargo Management Logistics Limited, to boost in-country commodity security. It has proven to be reliable, efficient, and effective. Clients like Fanny and hundreds more countrywide are clearly benefiting from the readily available malaria commodities.

“These are essential commodities that must be available at health facilities. A day cannot pass without encountering a malaria patient, so PSC has really helped in saving lives.”

Vuso Tembo
Pharmacy Technician
Blantyre District Hospital

“Unlike previous years, we no longer worry about availability of malaria medication at the health center,” Fanny said. “We hope this consistency continues, as it also eases our burden of travelling longer distances to other facilities just to access treatment, especially during the malaria season.”

Vuso Tembo, a pharmacy technician at Blantyre District Hospital, spoke about the significant impact the PSC model has had on patients like Fanny. He stated that PSC has made a key difference by improving the availability of essential medical commodities by eliminating stock-outs, reducing service interruption, and improving distribution planning. Previously, the facilities could go three or four months without receiving supplies, thereby affecting service delivery, as there was no consistent time between receiving one shipment

and the next. “We can now plan around the stock we have because we know, for example, that we receive malaria products on a regular interval,” he said.

“These are essential commodities that must be available at health facilities. A day cannot pass without encountering a malaria patient, so PSC has really helped in saving lives.”

The GHSC-PSM project, in collaboration with other partners, continues to provide technical assistance to Malawi’s MOH in coordinating the many existing parallel health supply chains through central-level

interventions, including forecasting, supply planning, developing the workforce, and augmenting the government's in-country logistics efforts.

The GHSC-PSM parallel supply chain system complements the government-led major supply chain that is run by the central medical stores in Malawi; the scope of the PSC includes procurement, warehousing, and distribution of U.S. Government-donated commodities. In-country logistics are supported by a third-party logistics (3PL) provider to improve commodity security.



Evance Chidakwa and Francis Kwanunkhantonde loading malaria commodities at the New Pharmaceutical Warehouse in Lilongwe, Malawi.
Photo by David Kapezi

ANGOLA



BETTERING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR PATIENTS LIVING WITH HIV

The mainstay of HIV treatment is the triple combination of specific medications. When taken as instructed, it reduces a patient's viral load, enabling a long and healthy life. Before the current optimal antiretroviral (ARV) treatment—tenofovir/lamivudine/dolutegravir, or TLD—tenofovir/lamivudine/efavirenz, or TLE, was the main treatment for people living with HIV. While it helped reduce viral load, it also caused side effects, such as exhaustion and insomnia. Along with coping with these side effects, people living with HIV had to return monthly to their service delivery point to collect their medication, since the bottle had only 30 pills—one for each day of the month.

With TLD's arrival, patients' quality of life improved significantly. The fixed-dose combination is well tolerated, suppresses viral load faster, is more durable, has far fewer side effects, and has a higher drug resistance barrier. Also, it comes in 90-tablet bottles, providing the patient with a three-month supply of medicine instead of just one month, saving time and money by reducing trips to clinics.

"The benefits of TLD 90 are amazing," explained one patient in Angola who preferred not to be named. "We can take the medication at any time of the day without worrying about side effects that may affect the performance of our socio-professional life, as this does not have significant side effects. Also, since the compound contains 90 pills, we no longer need to go to health facilities every month, just every three months. This makes things easier because many units are located around 100km from our locations, which increases transport costs for many of us who already have financial challenges."

In Angola, GHSC-PSM provides support to the MOH around increasing multi-month dispensing (MMD) of ARVs. In June 2021, the project also delivered on its promise to provide 34,000 90-tablet bottles of TLD, which were moved from the central warehouse to PEPFAR-supported health facilities across Angola through third-party logistics.

The patient also called for the continuity of work aimed at improving ARV therapy to enhance the quality of life for people living with HIV and thanked all partners—USAID, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), PEPFAR, GHSC-PSM, United Nations Development Programme, and MOH—for their support in ensuring that these ARVs are regularly available.



Patient in Angola receiving the optimal ARV, TLD.
Photo by Sérgio Custódio Bunde Chiquete

“We can take the medication at any time of the day without worrying about side effects that may affect the performance of our socio-professional life, as this does not have significant side effects for the human body.”



HAITI AND ZAMBIA RECEIVE ISONIAZID 300MG DONATED BY LESOTHO: LESOTHO MOH HELPED TO REDUCE OVERSTOCKING BY REDISTRIBUTING TB MEDICINE TO ENSURE CONTINUOUS AVAILABILITY AND TREATMENT OF TB PATIENTS

Haiti and Zambia recently received donations of isoniazid (INH) 300mg TB medication from Lesotho after a stock redistribution exercise. In March 2021, the Lesotho MOH Supply Chain department, in collaboration with GHSC-PSM, was tasked with conducting an assessment to establish the extent of overstocking at the service delivery points and recommending solutions. INH 300mg TB medication was found overstocked in Lesotho from 2019 to 2021. As a result, the MOH Supply Chain department and GHSC-PSM recommended that the MOH donate some of the product to countries experiencing shortages.

MOH's plans to transition to torifapentine (RPT)—also known as the 3HP regimen—a shorter- course treatment, were hampered as a result. The overstock was caused by an anticipated backlog of patients, which was predicted by the MOH TB program. The TB program anticipated a high demand for INH 300mg and planned to use the commodity in campaigns to scale up its program. However, actual demand for the product was lower than projected and led to slow movement and risk of expiry of the overstocked product.



Isoniazid (INH) 300mg tuberculosis (TB) medication

Photo by: Dr. A Sanabria

GHSC-PSM in Lesotho then engaged the GHSC-PSM Headquarters Supply Chain Unit to help identify countries that were in need of the product. “On behalf of the Ministry of Health Zambia and indeed the National TB Program, we are very grateful for your efficient facilitation of the donation of the INH 300mg tablets from Lesotho. This will go a long way in covering the gap and the potential to avert the stock out of one key TPT treatment option in the country. The donated tablets will help the program to completely treat about 30,000 TPT-eligible patients in our facilities”, said Zambia’s MOH representative.

Zambia and Haiti were the two countries identified. By the end of October 2021, the project in Lesotho had collaborated with the GHSC-PSM Headquarters Supply Chain Unit to facilitate all formal processes for the product donation to the two countries. Lesotho was finally able to donate IHM 300mg tablets—7,941x672 to Zambia and 1,000x672 tablets to Haiti—in November 2021.



PATIENTS AND HEALTH WORKERS BENEFIT FROM MULTI-MONTH HIV PRESCRIPTIONS: ACCELERATION OF DIFFERENTIATED SERVICE DELIVERY OF ART TREATMENT



Taolo Gabasiane, nurse prescriber at Jwaneng Mine Hospital in Botswana. Photo by GHSC-PSM

Access to extended ART refills, or MMD, is being accelerated in Botswana. Jwaneng Mine Hospital is one of the largest health facilities in the country serving a population of over 18,000 people and provides life-saving ART to at least 710 HIV clients. To make it easier for these clients to get their medications and stay on treatment, the hospital offers MMD of ART to stable clients. Medically stable clients can receive six months of ART, thus eliminating the need for monthly clinic visits.

“This has made our work easier because when you supply clients with drugs for a period of three months, it means less people are coming through to the facility and it promotes a self-care model. Clients take ownership of and responsibility for their treatment,” said Taolo Gabasiane, nurse prescriber at Jwaneng Mine Hospital. “When we told clients that they were now going to be supplied with medication for three months, they were happy.”

Taolo explained that during the monitoring and support visits, clients’ perspectives on how the MMD has impacted their access to ART treatment were noted. Patients reported that the MMD allowed them to access services in a timely manner, with no congestion on refill days. Other patients remarked that MMD instilled in them a feeling that they are trusted partners in the entire ART care and treatment process.

This in turn has simplified the work of health care workers because patients now own the treatment initiative and have become more responsible with their medication. The MMD has increased the quality of treatment and care for ART patients, as health care workers now have enough time to interact with patients and address their specific needs.

Botswana Health System adopted differentiated service delivery models, including the multi-month dispensing approach to improve the impact of the country’s HIV response in meeting the UNAIDS 2030’s 95-95-95 targets through improved treatment adherence and improved health system efficiencies.

The MMD comes in two categories: three months (3MM) and six months (6MM). The choice of either category depends mainly on the patient meeting set eligibility criteria

and availability of the drugs. As a result, the supply chain plays a pivotal role in ensuring that MMD is achieved across the health system.

GHSC-PSM worked with the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) to ensure that MMD implementation is clear and fluent. The support includes successful development of the MMD eligibility flow chart and its guidelines in collaboration with the MOHW and other implementing partners. GHSC-PSM continues to facilitate stakeholder engagement meetings and workshops to promote the benefits of MMD in ARV management and, as a result, how the supply chain continuum will respond to MMD implementation requirements.

This in turn has simplified the work of health care workers because patients now own the treatment initiative and have become more responsible with their medication.

Central Medical Stores together with GHSC-PSM has also modified the dispensary register to include MMD capturing and subsequent reporting by the facilities. This development in the dispensary register would help to know which MMD category is commonly used and what the implications are on supply chain management. GHSC-PSM also continues to support the MOHW with monitoring the MMD roll-out during the quarterly monitoring and support visits. Through this exercise, the MOHW can assess the progress made since MMD was adopted, as well as assess the facilities' readiness for implementing the MMD, thus for those that have not yet started implementing it.

NAMIBIA



CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PHARMACISTS: SUPPLY-CHAIN-TRAINED PHARMACISTS ARE KEY TO IMPROVING ART SERVICE DELIVERY

“With the knowledge I’ve gained, I’m able to manage inventory in bulk stores to ensure on-time orders and deliveries, as well as to help reduce stockouts and avoid commodity expiration,” said Zelalem Tessema, a newly recruited senior pharmacist at Oshakati multi-regional medical depot. “I am grateful for and satisfied with all the technical support that I received.”

Zelalem is one of the pharmacists trained by GHSC-PSM in Syspro®, an electronic inventory management system module that includes purchase ordering, receiving, completing health facilities order, warehousing, report generation to help him improve his performance in his current role, build knowledge, and become familiar with the overall standard operating procedures of the medical stores.



Pharmacists and pharmacist assistants, training on EDT and FESC held in Windhoek, October 18–22, 2021. Photo by Malilo Limbo

This year, in collaboration with the MOH, GHSC-PSM also trained 86 pharmacists and pharmacist assistants in using the Electronic Dispensing Tool (EDT) and the Facility Electronic Stock Card (FESC) for patient and inventory management used by ART pharmacies. The training prepared participants for their expected new roles as managers of pharmaceutical services and activities at the district and primary health care levels.

“With the knowledge I’ve gained, I’m able to manage inventory in bulk stores to ensure on-time orders and deliveries, as well as to help reduce stockouts and avoid commodity expiration. I am grateful and satisfied with all the technical support that I received.”

*Zelalem Tessema, Senior Pharmacist at
Oshakati Multi-Regional Medical depot*

The training gave the participants an appreciation of the importance of capturing data accurately to facilitate its use for decision making after data collection at the national level. Participants were also introduced to the dashboard for pharmaceutical information, enabling them to understand their role in ensuring that reports from the patient and stock management tools (EDT and FESC) should always be uploaded onto the dashboard.

It is clearer than ever that health commodities do not reach the last mile unless competent and well-trained health workers are there to deliver essential health services to patients. Access to medicines and commodities is the cornerstone of successful HIV care and treatment and requires a dependable supply chain and competent, trained pharmacy staff. To ensure

uninterrupted availability of ART, the project continues to support the Ministry of Health and Social Services in enhancing the capacity of pharmaceutical services through training. The major goal of the training is to improve ART outcomes and the availability and use of pharmaceutical services. The training comprised onsite staff mentoring through supportive supervision visits and training sessions adapted to the needs of the target staff.

Well-functioning health supply chains composed of pharmacists and pharmacist assistants are required to ensure that medicines reach the people who need them.

INDUSTRY NEWS



WHO Global Tuberculosis Report 2021

The World Health Organization (WHO)'s 2021 Global Tuberculosis Report presents key facts, global findings, commitments, strategies, and targets on TB. The report demonstrates an overall

drop in performance and reversal of gains in diagnosis and treatment of TB achieved over the years—leading to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic in most of the six WHO regions. There are some national and regional success stories, but global TB targets are mostly off-track. Actions to mitigate and reverse the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on TB are urgently needed, with the immediate priority of restoring access to and providing essential TB services. This report is invaluable to TB programs, implementing mechanisms, front-line workers, academic institutions, and other partners.

Check the report on this weblink: <https://aslm.org/resource/who-global-tuberculosis-report-2021/>



WHO Guidance to Support HIV Care Models During the COVID-19 Era

In September 2021, WHO released updated guidance on maintaining essential health services during COVID-19, which provides direction

on modifications and specific measures for safe delivery of HIV services, and considerations for transition toward restoration and recovery.

<https://aslm.org/resource/who-guidance-to-support-hiv-care-models-during-the-covid-19-era/>

UPCOMING EVENTS



The 24th International AIDS Conference 2022 in Montreal, Canada

AIDS 2022 will take place in person in Montreal, Canada, as well as virtually from July 29 through August 2, 2022. The conference will call on the world to come together to re-engage and follow the science. It will define future research agendas, shift latest evidence to action, and chart a new consensus on overcoming the HIV epidemic as a threat to public health and individual well-being. For more information, visit <https://www.aids2022.org/>

RESOURCES

Organization: African Society of Laboratory Medicine (ASLM)

ASLM is an independent, international, not-for-profit organization that coordinates, galvanizes and mobilizes stakeholders at the local, national, and international levels to improve local access to world-class diagnostic services and ensure healthy African communities now and for the long-term. You can learn more by visiting:

<https://aslm.org/>

Organization: Africa Resource Center (ARC)

ARC works with ministries of health to address the critical areas for building more efficient and effective health supply chain systems. Find out more on:

<https://www.africaresourcecentre.org/>

Delivering HIV/AIDS Health Commodities to Patients: The Supply Chain Impact

What began as an unknown illness arising from a viral infection that attacked the immune system eventually came to the forefront in 1981 when the first five cases were reported by the CDC. Today, approximately 38 million people globally are living with HIV.

The global health community has come a long way in testing, treatment, care, and prevention since HIV was first identified. More people have access to life-saving ARV treatments than ever before, enabling people living with HIV to live long and healthy lives. Thanks to PEPFAR and USAID, life-saving HIV/AIDS commodities reach millions of people globally who need them most using the GHSC-PSM project's procurement mechanism.

<https://www.ghsupplychain.org/index.php/hiv-aids-supply-chain-impact>

Guidelines: A Network Approach to Scaling Up Laboratory Services

USAID, PEPFAR, and their implementing partners have played a leading role in helping countries expand and transform their laboratory services to be more cost effective, efficient, and responsive to patient needs.

This document serves as a guide for implementing a network approach to strengthening and scaling up laboratory services. It describes the experience of countries, partners, and donors that are shifting to

this network perspective. It also describes the components of a network approach in detail, with practical examples from countries to provide more information about the specific lessons learned, successes, and challenges of implementation.

The guide also examines progress by global HIV donors on negotiating national and global pricing agreements, as well as inclusive service agreements that ensure that procurements of equipment and commodities are tied to successful patient test results.

<https://www.ghsupplychain.org/index.php/network-approach-scaling-laboratory-services>

Digital Ecosystem for Family Planning Supply Chain

This analysis is designed to understand and map the family planning (FP) digital supply chain ecosystems of two countries to identify the existing level of use of digital platforms, such as the Global Family Planning Visibility and Analytics Network, and understand how these e-health and digital strategies can advance countries' FP2030 commitments and strengthen sustainable country procurement, supply/demand planning, forecasting, and data visibility. This report reflects a landscape analysis of the FP supply chain ecosystem in Malawi and Ghana.

<https://www.ghsupplychain.org/index.php/digital-ecosystem-family-planning-supply-chain>

World AIDS Day 2021 Zine

To mark 40 years since the first five cases of AIDS were officially reported on in the CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, GHSC-PSM project created a zine that looks back at the impact of HIV/AIDS and that of the global health community, including the project. Short for "magazines," zines are created and self-published by individuals or groups of people. They are a conduit to engage more at the community level and help elevate marginalized voices. In the 1980s and 1990s—the height of the AIDS epidemic and before the Internet—zines played a role in communicating resources and information on AIDS, especially to those affected by it.

<https://www.ghsupplychain.org/index.php/world-aids-day-2021-zine-ghsc-psm>

USAID GLOBAL HEALTH SUPPLY CHAIN PROGRAM

Procurement and Supply Management

ABOUT US

The USAID Global Health Supply Chain Program-Procurement and Supply Management (GHSC-PSM) project enhances the health care experience in the communities we serve through transformative supply chain solutions. GHSC-PSM purchases and delivers health commodities, strengthens national supply chain systems, and provides global supply chain leadership to ensure lifesaving health supplies reach those in need, when they need them. By working closely with country partners and suppliers worldwide, the project aims to promote wellbeing and help countries develop sustainable supply chain systems. GHSC-PSM has programs in nine countries of Southern Africa: Angola, Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. For more information go to <https://www.ghsupplychain.org/PSM>.