

THE ORGANIZATION OF A NATIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL SYSTEM

BACKGROUND

About seven years ago, the Dominican Republic's national tuberculosis (TB) program adopted the use of fixed-dose combination therapies and diagnostic kits procured through the Global Drug Facility. The TB program accomplished this with technical assistance on pharmaceutical management from the US Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems (SPS) Program. Impact evaluation studies demonstrated increased availability of medicines and diagnostic materials and an approximate savings of USD 1 million per year.^{1, 2, 3}

The HIV/AIDS program requested technical assistance to support a similar approach to improve the supply management of antiretroviral and diagnostic commodities. SPS suggested a comprehensive approach to confront all pharmaceutical management problems in the Ministry of Health (MoH).⁴ In 2010, the MoH officially launched the national pharmaceutical management system (Sistema Único de Gestión de Medicamentos e Insumos [SUGEMI]), as the most efficient and sustainable strategy to improve the pharmaceutical management of the TB, HIV/AIDS, and other MoH programs.

USAID'S SUPPORT TO SUGEMI

Since 2010, USAID, SPS and recently the Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (SIAPS) Program have supported—



- **Development of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and MoH personnel trained:** All components of SUGEMI have SOPs for their implementation throughout the country. Personnel in 1,105 primary care health centers as well as pharmacists and technicians in 143 hospitals and 9 Health Regions were trained. Training was cofinanced by USAID, PAHO/WHO, and Global Fund/MoH resources totaling USD 123,000.
- **Programming national exercises for 2012 and 2013 procurement using standardized methodology of medicines and supplies:** These programming exercises have enabled centralized purchasing through PROMESE-CAL and close a financing gap of USD 3.8 million for antiretroviral financing. Responding to the presidential decree to organize a national consolidated procurement, the second programming exercise included all public institutions. Estimated savings are approximately USD 32 million.

¹ Study included in Barillas, E. 2005. *Sistema de Suministro de Medicamentos e Insumos del Programa Nacional de Control de Tuberculosis de República Dominicana*: Informe de Viaje, abril de 2005. Presentado a la Agencia para el Desarrollo Internacional de los Estados Unidos por Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus Program. Arlington, VA: Management Sciences for Health.

² Valdez, C., and E. Barillas. 2009. *Evaluación del Impacto de la introducción de combinaciones a dosis fija en el abandono del tratamiento de la Tuberculosis en la República Dominicana*. Presentado a la Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional por el Programa Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems (SPS). Arlington, VA: Management Sciences for Health.

³ Valdez, C., and E. Barillas. 2008. *Estudio de Línea Basal de la Situación de la Gestión de Suministro de Insumos de Laboratorio del PNCT en República Dominicana*. Presentado a la Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional por el Programa SPS. Arlington, VA: Management Sciences for Health.

⁴ Barillas, E., and C. Valdez. 2008. *Análisis de la Gestión del Suministro de Medicamentos e Insumos de Salud del Sector Público en República Dominicana*. Presentado a la Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional por Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems (SPS) Program. Arlington, VA: Management Sciences for Health.

- **Assessment of warehousing conditions and transportation fleet:** Studies conducted in 2010 and 2011^{5,6} identified the financial requirements necessary for improvement of warehouse and transportation conditions in the Regional Health Services. Based on renovation and construction proposals, during 2011 and 2012, more than USD 461,000 of national and international (of the Global Fund TB project) resources) have been mobilized to initiate infrastructure improvements. As of July 2013, four regional warehouses—SRS II (Santiago), SRS III (San Francisco de Macorís), SRS VII (Valverde Mao) and SRS VIII (La Vega)—have been renovated and their personnel trained.
- **National inventory of MoH medicines and supplies:** This marked the starting point of SUGEMI implementation. This inventory supported the transfer of HIV and TB program medicines from provincial to Regional Health Services (731,078 units, valued in USD 115,746), as established by the health sector reform.
- **Electronic application for pharmaceutical management information system:** A simple electronic tool was developed and installed to consolidate availability and consumption data at regional and central levels. All relevant personnel were trained.
- **Training modules for certified course on pharmaceutical supply management:** To contribute to SUGEMI sustainability, SPS developed training modules for a certified course on pharmaceutical supply management, implemented in cooperation with the National University (Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, or UASD). The certified course was completed in May 2013 with the graduation of 33 students.

WHAT HAVE USAID AND ITS PARTNERS ACHIEVED?

SUGEMI is quickly moving toward implementation and completion of—

- Incorporation of SUGEMI's regular operations to the MoH budget to guaranty the sustainability of the system.
- Transfer of capabilities to the health personnel at central and regional levels.
- Integration of disease control programs (DCPs) (and other *vertical* programs) to SUGEMI. By October 2013, two additional DCPs will be integrated to SUGEMI. They will participate in the national programming exercise for 2015 procurement and follow SUGEMI procedures for requisition and delivery of medicines and supplies.
- Analysis and discussion of the national programming exercises conducted in 2012 and 2013, which have optimize the use of the MoH financial resources.
- Improvement of SRS warehouse conditions, based on an assessment that triggered the mobilization of national and international sources
- Implementation of a pharmaceutical management information, monitoring, and evaluation system.

With these activities, SUGEMI is strengthening the National Health Service system and contributing to the consolidation of the health sector reform and the transparency and decentralization of the public administration.

⁵ Espinoza, H., A. Mendoza, L. Aurich, and A. Guerrero. 2011. *Formulación de un plan de mejoramiento de las condiciones y prácticas de almacenamiento de medicamentos e insumos de los Servicios Regionales de Salud 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, y 7 de República Dominicana*. Presentado a la Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional por Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems (SPS) Program. Arlington, VA: Management Sciences for Health.

⁶ Morera, Domingo. 2011. *Informe Técnico: Diagnóstico para la Organización de la Red de Distribución del Sistema Único de Gestión de Medicamentos e Insumos (SUGEMI)*. Presentado a la Agencia de los Estados Unidos para el Desarrollo Internacional por Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems (SPS) Program. Arlington, VA: Management Sciences for Health.