

## Cost savings and country ownership: Investing in systems

Long-term sustainability in health care provision requires country ownership. SCMS is helping the Government of Ethiopia reach its complete health care coverage goal by supporting the development and expansion of the public health supply chain. In partnership with the government, SCMS works to transfer projects and offer on-going support to ensure those transitions are smooth. One such example is the work being done in data collection and reporting systems, which fosters greater country ownership and reduces operational costs.

The Pharmaceuticals Fund and Supply Agency (PFSA) of Ethiopia, with support from SCMS, was operating an externally developed and owned health commodity tracking system. This external system required annual licensing fees and external maintenance costs, and was not financially or functionally suitable for the long-term. PFSA and SCMS analyzed the options and began developing a more sustainable solution for data systems use and management. Based on their assessments, PFSA and SCMS helped to redevelop the existing system locally so that the software would be owned and operated by PFSA, and accommodate PFSA's needs with additional features. In addition, PFSA staff were trained on using the software so that future upgrades and

maintenance could be done locally. SCMS also equipped an industry-standard server room at PFSA where the software would be hosted.

The redeveloped system, the Pharmaceutical Logistics Information Tracking System (PLITS), is a web-based data collection and tracking software. This new software has online and offline applications, which allow the tracking software to synchronize when connected to the internet. PLITS facilitates nation-wide data management, planning, forecasting, quantification, and improved decision making for pharmaceutical distribution.

PLITS offers many advantages over the previously used system. Aside from being country-owned, with no annual licensing fees, it is locally developed, so upgrades and



The screenshot shows the web interface for the Pharmaceutical Logistics Information Tracking System (PLITS). At the top, it features the logo of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Pharmaceuticals Fund & Supply Agency (PFSA). Below this, the title 'PHARMACEUTICALS LOGISTICS INFORMATION TRACKING SYSTEM (PLITS)' is displayed. The interface includes a navigation menu with 'Home', 'Publications', 'Reports', 'FAQ', and 'Log In'. A 'SPONSORS' section lists PEPFAR. The main content area is divided into 'News', 'Request Status', 'Alert', and 'Feedback'. The 'Request Status' section contains a table with the following data:

Destination	Status	
Addis Ababa	Closed	<a href="#">View Detail &gt;&gt;</a>
Addis Ababa	New	<a href="#">View Detail &gt;&gt;</a>
Addis Ababa	New	<a href="#">View Detail &gt;&gt;</a>

Below the table, there is a 'Drug Recall' section.

The revised Pharmaceutical Logistics Information Tracking System (PLITS) fosters greater country ownership and reduces operational costs.

maintenance can be arranged by PFSA. As a result, PLITS is more cost effective than the old system. In addition, PLITS is suited to include all pharmaceutical products and has a number of new features, such as: drug recall, drug expiry, alerts for adverse drug events, feedback, news management, publication management, on-going monitoring and automatic report generation.

PLITS serves to connect thousands of health facilities, to regional hubs and to the central store. To date, the system is being used to aggregate pharmaceutical logistics data collected from over 1,200 ART and PMTCT sites. This data reports on stock quantity so that products can be moved at the right time and in the right quantity. Such efficiency helps reduce emergency orders and product expiry. PLITS also facilitates improved forecasting and procurement, as a result of improved data quality and quantity.

PLITS links to the Health Commodities Management Information System (HCMIS), a system developed by the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT. Both systems were designed to allow for interfacing and data sharing. The interfacing enables data exchange between systems and avoids duplication in data entry work, significantly improving efficiency and data availability.

The PLITS system redevelopment has resulted in improved functionality, greater country ownership and reduced operational costs. PFSA's physical capacity was expanded with a server room, and human capacity was developed through training. Since it is owned and operated by PFSA, PLITS is a more financially and functionally sustainable system. In the near future, the system will be deployed in public health facilities to replace the paper-based reporting system.

## ABOUT SCMS

The Supply Chain Management System (SCMS) was established to collaborate within country and global partners to ensure a reliable, cost-effective and secure supply of high quality medicines and health products for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment. SCMS is funded as part of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Visit us at [www.scms.pfscm.org](http://www.scms.pfscm.org).

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Agency for International Development or the United States government.

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