

# SCMS

## IN BRIEF



## In Ethiopia, knowledge is power: improving pharmaceutical tracking for better forecasting, procurement and distribution

Patients living with HIV/AIDS are at risk when pharmacies or clinics stock out of life-saving medicines, or store medicines past their expiration date. The risk is especially serious for facilities in remote, rural areas.

Emergencies, however, can be prevented with good information, such as how much medicine is being used and how often. In Ethiopia, such information from sites helps drive decisions about how much to procure for the national program, and how much and when to distribute to regions. In this case, knowledge is power: the power to ensure people receive the medicine and treatment they require when they most need it.



Menfese Tadesse manages teams engaging in process improvement for a number of software applications used by the Ethiopia's Pharmaceutical Fund Supply Agency (PFSA).

Menfese Tadesse and Melkamu Tessema, two staff members at Ethiopia's Pharmaceutical Fund and Supply Agency (PFSA), work to ensure that important data is available, accurate and accessible.

Menfese is the Senior Software Officer and Coordinator of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project at PFSA's central Addis Ababa office. She manages teams engaging in process improvement for a number of software applications used by the agency, including the redevelopment of the Pharmaceutical Logistics Information Tracking System (PLITS) as well as the interfacing software that connects PLITS with PFSA's other software.

PLITS, launched in 2013 by PFSA and the Supply Chain Management System (SCMS) — a project of PEPFAR administered by USAID — is a web-based data aggregation and decision support tool jointly developed by PFSA and SCMS. The redeveloped PLITS system will improve data collection and quality, which is important for accurate forecasting, procurement and distribution decisions. Menfese says this redevelopment “improves a lot” in the system and available functions. SCMS has provided Menfese and PFSA with a Training of Trainers program for managing and rolling out the new PLITS tool. The training she received will enable her to “support users of the system and provide technical training” to other staff at PFSA. In the near future, Menfese will train her fellow staff at PFSA on the configuration and use of the redeveloped application.

Melkamu, a graduate in Computer Science and Information Technology, is new to the PFSA Nekemte team at the Nekemte regional hub in western Ethiopia, which supplies medical products to almost 300 health facilities. Trained by SCMS on PLITS, Melkamu works with PLITS to track all pharmaceutical products used in the pharmaceutical distribution system. To enable improved decision making in forecasting, procurement and distribution, PLITS creates improvements in data availability, quality and quantity, which allow for stronger analysis and results in a more efficient and effective supply system.

PLITS replaces a pharmaceutical tracking system with limited functions and product-specific uses. The important role it plays in improving distribution and management is outlined to PFSA staff in all PLITS trainings. The first training on the PLITS system for pharmaceutical products took place in Addis Ababa and was attended by representatives from PFSA hubs across Ethiopia. Melkamu, who was among the first batch of trainees, says his trainer, an SCMS staff member, was skillful and that the system was “new for the users, so the training was very useful.” Melkamu now knows how PLITS can be used to improve distribution, and how it will strengthen his role in the public health supply chain.



Melkamu Tessema works with the Pharmaceutical Logistics Information Tracking System (PLITS) to track all pharmaceutical products used in the pharmaceutical distribution 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).

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