

## Finding Solutions for Difficult Problems: Short Shelf Life Products

One of the challenges of managing the public health supply chain is that certain laboratory and pharmaceutical products have a very short shelf life. For example, Hematology Test Samples, one laboratory product currently procured in Ethiopia, has a shelf life upon arrival of just sixteen days.

Short shelf life laboratory products, however, play a crucial role in ensuring critical services are available through HIV/AIDS programs, such as verifying that machines used for HIV/AIDS testing produce accurate and reliable results.

The Pharmaceutical Fund and Supply Agency (PFSA), which procures and distributes pharmaceutical products in Ethiopia, and SCMS have been working to improve the management of short shelf life products. Once they arrive at the port, products enter a sixteen-step process to reach their destination. With thousands of health facilities across Ethiopia, product tracking ensures these products arrive safely and are quickly used by laboratory technicians to test the operation of machines used in even the most remote parts of the country.

To better manage these time-sensitive commodities, PFSA and SCMS first developed a paper-based tracking system, which detailed the timelines and responsibilities for supplying short shelf life products. Once the system was implemented, management improved and product expiry was reduced. However, a lack of communication and up-to-date

continued to pose challenges. As a result, SCMS and PFSA developed an electronic workflow management system. The process tracking system, the Short Shelf Life Product Management System (SSLPMS), ensures that everyone involved in the short shelf life product supply chain has access to real-time product monitoring. Staff members from PFSA and SCMS are alerted when it is their responsibility to act and the system automatically notifies supervisors in the case of delays.

At present there are over 2,000 HIV/AIDS products being procured within Ethiopia, but only nineteen have a shelf life of six-months or less. In efforts to prevent expiry of commodities, short shelf life products are automatically added to the SSLPMS. These efforts aim to avert such unfortunate examples as a 2011 product expiry due to unclear management responsibility and a 2012 expiry caused by insufficient communication. These kinds of losses are preventable, and SSLPMS was designed to do just that. Importantly, address-



In Ethiopia, health facility workers use a short shelf life process tracking system to ensure products with expiration dates are effectively managed.

ing these challenges translates into improved service provision. Without these short shelf life laboratory products, laboratory machine testing might be inaccurate or altogether unavailable. The SSLPMS is, therefore, an important addition to prevent expiry and to ensure laboratory testing is available and accurate.

Through recording shipment information of short shelf life products, the new system automatically tracks product movement, provides a timeline, tracks the required activities and responsibilities, sends email alerts to all people involved in the distribution process and provides all the details on product quantity and expiry. In addition, SSLPMS sends out an alert when the product is near expiry, a daily reminder email is sent to the respective PFSA or SCMS staff member whose task is pending, and an email is sent to that worker's supervisor if they are delayed. Should a delay impact the distribution schedule to result in product expiry before reaching its destination, an email is sent to the Country Deputy Director.

SSLPMS's alert system allows distributors and facilities to ensure that short shelf life products are effectively managed, and batches with near expiry dates are put at a higher priority when distributing products to clients. This process reduces wastage and expiry of product in a simple, and effective, manner. In addition to being capable of managing of short shelf life items, SSLPMS is also capable of adding products near expiry which are non-short shelf life products. A second phase of development is underway to update the system based on feedback from users on enhancing the

Task code	Assigned Person	Task name	Start date	Expected end date	End date	Expiry date	Status
18346-104810	Abyu Faris	Compile and submit	Mar 26, 2013	Mar 27, 2013		Mar 25, 2013	Open
18620-104799	Munir Abdella	Receipt at hubs & Arrange transport	Apr 04, 2013	Apr 06, 2013		Apr 03, 2013	Open
18702-108936	Munir Abdella	Facilitate STV	Apr 04, 2013	Apr 06, 2013		Apr 08, 2013	Open
18669-108820	Munir Abdella	Receipt at hubs & Arrange transport	Apr 04, 2013	Apr 06, 2013		Apr 12, 2013	Open
18346-108275	Abyu Faris	Compile and submit	Mar 26, 2013	Mar 27, 2013		Apr 19, 2013	Open
18808-104810	Desalegn Asres	Finalize distribution plan and Communicate	Mar 26, 2013	Mar 27, 2013		Apr 22, 2013	Open
18669-108825	Munir Abdella	Receipt at hubs & Arrange transport	Apr 04, 2013	Apr 06, 2013		Apr 30, 2013	Open
19020-104799	Desalegn Asres	Prepare draft distribution plan	Apr 04, 2013	Apr 05, 2013		May 01, 2013	Open

SCMS and PFSA developed the Short Shelf Life Products Management System (SSLPMS) to provide access to real-time product monitoring.

tool with additional functions that incorporate forecasting, supply planning and procurement processes.

As part of process improvement efforts, the short shelf life product management work flow and the SSLPMS tool are expected to be adapted and incorporated in to PFSA's storage and distribution standard operating procedures. Doing so will enable PFSA to standardize the management of short shelf life products beyond HIV/AIDS laboratory commodities.

## 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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