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Success Story

In Ethiopia, Health Post Resupply Initiative Helps Bring Medicines to the Last Mile

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Tsehayenesh Worku, a mother of five, is receiving family planning counseling from health extension workers at Den Zuria Health Post.

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At Den Zuria Health Post in Ethiopia, Tsehayenesh Worku, a mother of five, is receiving ongoing counseling from her health extension worker about family planning and other maternal health issues. The opening of the health post in her kebele—Ethiopia's smallest governmental administrative unit—has helped her, and her community of more than 6,800 people, access preventive and selected high-impact curative health services in their village.

The health extension program, initiated in 2004, has had a positive impact on almost all the key health indicators in the country. At the heart of the program is the training and deployment of more than 36,000 health extension workers (HEWs) to more than 18,000 health posts. However, because HEWs represent the last mile of the supply chain, and because of their large numbers, the supply chain management system at the health post-level faces several challenges.

Recognizing the challenges, in December 2011, the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT (the project), in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Fund and Supply Agency (PFSA), Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH), Regional Health Bureaus (RHBs), the Supply Chains4Community Case Management (SC4CCM) project, and other partners, initiated a health post resupply program as part of the Integrated Pharmaceutical Logistics System (IPLS). The goal of the Health Post Resupply Initiative is to ensure that health posts are resupplied with all required medicines and related supplies once a month.

Through a training-of-trainers workshop, more than 2,700 health extension supervisors and health center store managers received training on health post resupply. They, in turn, provided on-the-job training to HEWs coming to replenish their supplies, as well as during monthly Primary Health Care Unit (PHCU) meetings. Because each health center supports an average of five health posts, this training has benefited nearly 7,000 health posts to-date.

The project also developed reference materials—a practical guidebook (job aid), posters, storage guidelines, bin cards, and monthly reporting formats for HEWs; they have been distributed to more than 15,000 health posts.

These efforts are bringing significant changes and steady improvements to the healthcare supply chain. With support from the initiative, health posts are now applying an inventory control system and using the information for the report and resupply of drugs. For example, among 122 health posts visited during supportive supervision between April–June 2013, about three-quarters were using the monthly report and request form.

With improved commodity management and resupply procedures for health posts, HEWs have greater access to medicines and medical supplies. According to the supportive supervision results, the availability of contraceptive injectables and hormonal implants was more than 95 percent at the time of visit. Similarly, oral rehydration salts (ORS), ferrous sulphate, and Coartem—essential supplies for reducing under-five mortality—were also available in most of the facilities; approximately 90 percent of the facilities had them in stock.

The government of Ethiopia and the community have high expectations from the health extension program. Thus, the project—with PFSA, respective RHBs, SC4CCM, and other partners—is continuing to work with HEWs to keep pace with the demands of the community.

For the past year at the Den Zuria Health Post no stockout or shortage of widely used family planning methods and other Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) products was reported. The community is pleased that these essential medicines are available to safeguard the health of their families.

The USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, Task Order 4, is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, and implemented by John Snow, Inc. The project improves essential health commodity supply chains by strengthening logistics management information systems, streamlining distribution systems, identifying financial resources for procurement and supply chain operations, and enhancing forecasting and procurement planning. The project also encourages policymakers and donors to support logistics as a critical factor in the overall success of their health care mandates.

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