



Technical Assistance to the National Malaria Control Program to Strengthen the Malaria Supply Chain in Niger

SIAPS Quarterly Progress Report

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About SIAPS

The goal of the Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (SIAPS) Program is to assure the availability of quality pharmaceutical products and effective pharmaceutical services to achieve desired health outcomes. Toward this end, the SIAPS result areas include improving governance, building capacity for pharmaceutical management and services, addressing information needed for decision-making in the pharmaceutical sector, strengthening financing strategies and mechanisms to improve access to medicines, and increasing quality pharmaceutical services.

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ACRONYMS

CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DEP	Direction des Etudes et de la Programmation (Department of Studies and Planning)
Global Fund	Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders)
NFM	New Funding Mechanism (Global Fund)
NMCP	National Malaria Control Program
ONPPC	Office National des Produits Pharmaceutiques et Chimiques (Central Medical Store)
PSN	Plan stratégique national de lutte contre le paludisme (National Malaria Strategic Plan)
SIAPS	Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services Program
SMC	seasonal malaria chemoprevention
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

Malaria remains a major public health problem in Niger. Over the past four years, an average of 3,800,000 presumed cases of malaria were recorded per year (equivalent to an incidence rate of 24,910 cases per 100,000 inhabitants) and an annual average of 2,862 deaths (or a mortality rate of 0.25%). Malaria represents 31% of all the morbidity recorded in 2013 and constitutes the first cause of death in all the regions. In Niger, it is responsible for 57% of deaths overall and 76% of deaths among children under 5. Malaria affected 106,012 pregnant women in 2013 and caused 25 deaths (or a mortality rate of 0.02%) (Health statistical directory in Niger, SNIS 2013, p.59). However, these figures do not reflect the real situation of the country given the low coverage rate of the population (48% in 2013) and the number of malaria cases that escape notification at the community level.

The entire Nigerien population is exposed to malaria. However, pregnant women and children under 5 years of age are the most vulnerable groups and frequently develop severe malaria. The epidemiology of malaria in Niger is characterized by stable endemicity with a seasonal increase during and after the rainy season (June to December). The latest outbreak was recorded in July-August 2012 in the health districts of Niamey, Tillaberi, Agadez, and Abalak.

Malaria endemicity is superimposed on the geo-climatic zones with three epidemiological patterns summarized below depending on the type of transmission:

- A hypoendemic zone in the North (Sahara region) with sporadic transmission
- A mesoendemic zone in the intermediate Sahel region with seasonal transmission lasting less than 4 months
- A hyperendemic area in the South (Sudan region) with longer seasonal transmission of 4 to 6 months.

The National Malaria Strategic Plan 2011-2015, developed by the National Malaria Control Program (NMCP), highlighted the importance of maintaining constant availability of stocks and improving the current supply chain management system for malaria commodities. Support was requested and obtained from US agency for International Development (USAID) in the form of technical assistance to be provided to NMCP by the Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (SIAPS) Program.

In Niger, the objective will be to strengthening pharmaceutical management of health products used in the fight against the malaria. Specifically, a SIAPS Supply Chain Technical Advisor was embedded with NMCP for 18 months.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE

This report presents the progress of the SIAPS Niger project between January 26 (the date when the technical advisor arrived at post) and March 31, 2015 (the end of the quarter). It covers activities related to supply chain management of malaria commodities and the results obtained by the technical advisor within the framework of capacity building at the NMCP.

The main technical activities realized during the first quarter of 2015 include:

- Supported the development of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) Concept Note for the New Funding Mechanism (NFM) for the period 2016-2018
- Drafted terms of reference for a new technical committee focusing on supply chain management of malaria commodities
- Participated in the planning of the next campaign of seasonal malaria chemoprevention (SMC)
- Developed strategies and took immediate action to improve management of malaria commodities by revising the existing drug management tools used as part of the “push” distribution system

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

During this first quarter of the project, the SIAPS Supply Chain Technical Advisor collaborated closely with Niger's NMCP. Activities related to program management included:

- Introduction and orientation of the technical advisor to Ministry of Health authorities, USAID mission and other stakeholders
- Follow up on the Management Sciences for Health registration process in Niger

The registration folder submitted to the Niger Embassy in the United States in February arrived in country during the last week of March 2015. This file is now under review by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs department in charge of international nongovernmental organizations.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Introduction and Orientation to the Malaria Program in Niger

After official introductions, the SIAPS Technical Advisor spent the first two weeks of February attending various meetings that allowed to familiarize himself with the teams within the NCMP and the main partners involved in the supply chain. Individual meetings and working sessions took place with person in charge of health or supply chain management at the following agencies and organizations: NMCP, USAID, Direction des Etudes et de la Programmation (Department of Studies and Planning within the Ministry of Health; the director supervises NMCP), Office National des Produits Pharmaceutiques et Chimiques (ONPPC [Central Medical Store]) WHO and Catholic Relief Services (CRS). CRS is the Global Fund principal recipient and managing partner for the ACCESS-SMC project focused on SMC.

After several meetings with NMCP staff, the advisor noted that the current structure of NMCP does not allow the department in charge of managing malaria commodities to perform all of its functions properly. The advisor made recommendations relative to the structural organization of the program, with the goal of improving the various functions of the supply chain.

Specifically, NCMP should revise and clarify the functions of the Inventory Management department to build a well-functioning unit in charge of procurement and supply management of malaria products. This team could take on more responsibilities to manage quantifications, since to date the quantification of malaria products has been conducted by the NMCP Department of Monitoring and Evaluation.

Next steps include —

- Develop a supply plan for malaria products
- Assess data needed for quantification and management of commodities
- Address the lack of consumption and stock data at the peripheral level
- Develop a systematic distribution plan of malaria commodities, since the current one is based on epidemiological data without taking into account stock available at the district level and the average monthly consumption (a systematic push system is applied).

Development of the Global Fund Concept Note

With the new funding mechanism established by Global Fund, each country's national malaria control program and Country Coordination Mechanism are required to submit a concept note covering a three-year period (2016–2018) for an estimated funding level of 39 million euros. The deadline to submit the concept note is April 20, 2015.

The SIAPS Supply Chain Technical Advisor joined the technical working group working on this proposal and provided the necessary input on forecasts of malaria commodities as well as a better assessment of malaria program needs. Several workshops and meetings were conducted throughout February and March 2015 and a draft of the document was submitted to the Global Fund for review on March 14, 2015.

On March 24–25, 2015, the technical working group met with the Global Fund team to discuss the assumptions and information provided in the concept note. Based on the Global Fund country portfolio team observations and feedback, the technical working group continues to work on the concept note, aiming to submit another draft to Global Fund by April 6, 2015, before submitting the final version on April 20, 2015.

Launch of a Supply Chain Technical Committee for Malaria Products

To strengthen the management of malaria products and coordination among the various stakeholders, the Advisor provided assistance to NMCP in drafting the official letter and scope of work for a new technical committee that would focus on supply chain issues related to malaria. To date, there have been no formal meetings held among all the partners that are involved with malaria commodities and no coordination discussions on stock levels and consumption. Such lack of coordination among partner and the absence of supply plan has led to stock-outs and overstocks,.

The scope of work of this new technical committee has been endorsed by the Coordinator of NMCP and is now under review by the Medicines Regulatory Authority (Direction de la Pharmacie et de la médecine traditionnelle) and the ONPPC.

Working sessions are planned with DPH/MT and ONPPC during the first week of April to finalize the proposal and have the document signed by a Ministry of Health representative.

This committee would be responsible for—

- Developing annual and quarterly work plans on supply management
- Driving quantification activities for malaria products
- Developing and validating a national supply plan for malaria medicines in collaboration with all stakeholders
- Validating commodity needs and distribution plans
- Advising on technical documents relative to the management of supplies
- At least once per quarter, presenting and analyzing the status of logistics data for malaria medicines (stock balance, consumption, months of stock on hand) at the central level and eventually at the peripheral level

- Assessing risk management plans linked to the availability and quality of medicines

All the partner organizations involved with the management of malaria activities should have a representative on this committee, including the Ministry of Health (DEP, Direction of Finances, ONPPC) and the technical and financial partners (WHO, USAID, UNICEF, World Vision, CRS, Save the Children, Médecins Sans Frontières [MSF], etc.).

Next steps—

- The first meeting of this committee is tentatively scheduled for the end of April 2015.

Planning and Coordination of SMC Activities

In 2013–14, SMC was implemented as an experimental approach in seven health districts (Magaria, Mirriah, Madaraounfa, Guidam Roundji, Mayahi, Madaoua, and Bouza) with the support of multiple partners such as MSF, UNICEF, Save the Children, and Alima/BEFEN (a Niger nongovernmental organization). On average, 218,995 children received the intervention four times.

In 2015, the plan is for SMC to be scaled up to seven more districts with the support of the ACCESS-SMC project funded by UNITAID. However, due to the low availability of SMC commodities at the international level, the 2015 campaign cannot be implemented as originally planned by NMCP.

Consequently, after confirming stock availability with the ACCESS-SMC project and MSF, and taking into account the WHO recommendation to prioritize children who have already received this preventive treatment, the SIAPS Technical Advisor proposed a revised mapping of partner intervention which will allow NMCP to conduct the 2015 SMC campaign.

This new proposal will cover around 928,200 children out of approximately 1,200,000—a coverage rate of 77% in 12 health districts including the 7 previous one where campaign was done last year. This proposal has been discussed with all partners involved in SMC activities over four meetings (February 3 and March 3, 4 and 27, 2015).

Additional Activities Designed to Strengthen Malaria Supply Chain Management

During the first months at post, the SIAPS Technical Advisor worked closely with NMCP on additional activities that could improve malaria supply chain management in the country—

- Developed a work plan outlining key areas of improvement to be submitted to the NMCP Coordinator

Project Activities

- Reviewed job descriptions for the NMCP supply chain team and will propose updates in April. In addition to this proposal, a request has been made to the NMCP coordinator by the SIAPS advisor for at least one staff member of NMCP to be available for training and coaching on inventory management.
- Started the revision of current pharmaceutical management tools used by NMCP team for the push system
- Participated in a three-day workshop organized by the Medicines Regulatory Authority to provide input on an evaluation that assessed Niger's medicines supply chain three years ago
- Met with the ONPPC unit in charge of malaria commodities and agreed to hold biweekly meetings, quarterly inventories of malaria products, and begin to design a malaria logistics information system

Activities Planned for Next Quarter

Priority Actions	Time frame
Validate work plan for supply chain activities by NMCP	April 2015
Submit Global Fund Concept Note	April 15, 2015
Quarterly inventory of malaria products at the CMS	April 2015
Finalize the revised term of reference for NMCP department in charge of supply chain management	April–May 2015
Hold first meeting of the technical coordination committee on malaria supply chain management	End of April 2015
Launch the LLIN mass campaign	May 16, 2015
Revise tools used to define the malaria product distribution plan	May 2015
Endorse the malaria technical supply chain committee by the Ministry of Health	May 2015
Coordinate SMC activities related to supply chain	April–June 2015
Revise malaria product quantification	June 2015

QUARTERLY TRAVEL PLAN

Sites visits and coaching in Niamey region—May–June 2015

The purpose of these site visits will be to have an overview of how malaria commodities and logistics information are managed at the peripheral level and provide coaching to staff on stock inventory management, where needed.