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Logistics Brief

Launching the Information Revolution in the Ethiopian Public-Sector Healthcare Supply Chain

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PFSA employees receive HCMIS dashboard training.

With data literally at their fingertips, and at the click of a mouse, PFSA employees across the country are revolutionizing the supply chains they manage by using real-time data to make smarter, faster decisions and building an increasingly agile supply chain.

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On any day, the Pharmaceuticals Fund and Supply Agency (PFSA) in Ethiopia manages thousands of transactions—orders, receipts, issues, and transfers—which are the lifeblood of the public sector healthcare supply chain. PFSA, a Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) agency, ensures that all public-sector health facilities have the medicines and health commodities they need. Each transaction moves commodities one step closer to their end destination—the patients. To inform supply decisions, and to ensure the right quantities of the right commodities are going to the right locations, PFSA uses a locally developed warehouse and logistics information management system: the Health Commodity Management Information system (HCMIS). The USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, managed by John Snow, Inc. (JSI), developed the HCMIS in Ethiopia.

The HCMIS, a systematic recordkeeping tool, manages daily transactions at central and branch warehouses; it captures real-time transactional data across the PFSA network. With these data, users can forecast, procure, distribute, and dispense health commodities with confidence. An HCMIS dashboard, released in December 2015, allows PFSA employees real-time access to the supply chain data captured by HCMIS across the entire PFSA network of central warehouses and 16 branch warehouses.

PFSA employees use the HCMIS dashboard, an online business intelligence tool, to track key performance indicators for stock levels, expiries, and the pipeline in real-time. To enhance usability, users can select customized dashboards for various programs, including HIV, family planning, malaria, child health, etc.; or users can generate specific reports, identify trends, and discover business insights. In this way, PFSA not only manages their supply chain better, they also understand their business better.

Strengthening data access is only one piece of the puzzle. As part of the dashboard release, the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, partnering with PFSA, trained users from across the organization on how to use the dashboards to make smart, data-based decisions. Designed to be highly interactive and hands-on, the training fully immersed participants in the process, asking them to use data from the dashboard to solve real-life case studies from their personal business context. This exercise put participants squarely in the real world. Dashboard training was provided to 238 users from PFSA's center and all the branches with staff representing every supply chain function—from forecasting to finance. As a part of the overall training initiative, they now receive on-the-job coaching and peer-to-peer learning. The project is creating a network of super users who are deployed throughout PFSA. With coaching from the project, they provide on-the-job mentoring to colleagues as they transfer their classroom knowledge to workplace habits and integrate the dashboard into their daily routine. In the near future, PFSA plans to provide dashboard access to various stakeholders—primarily the FMOH. Ministry program managers will be able to check on the availability of vital medicines every day, instead of waiting for a monthly report.

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PFSA forecasting and capacity building officer uses the HCMIS dashboard to monitor stock status and consumption trends.

The training has accelerated the use of the dashboard across PFSA and already positive changes are being seen in the culture of PFSA around the vital role data plays in supply chain management. Forecasting and Capacity Building Officer Tesfahun Haile from the Negele Borena branch shared, "[the Dashboard] simplifies work done as it saves time and resources generating reports [and analysis instantly]. Whereas, previously data was hard to access and time-consuming to consolidate, now access is immediate." He went on to explain that, "it encourages [an] uninterrupted supply of health commodities as it shows information on [the] pipeline and tells us when and how many to order."

With data literally at their fingertips, and at the click of a mouse, PFSA employees across the country are revolutionizing the supply chains they manage by using real-time data to make smarter, faster decisions and building an increasingly agile supply chain. The dashboard unites users into a virtual community of data stewards, united by shared data. One of the priorities of the new Health Sector Transformation Plan for Ethiopia is to launch an information revolution. With live commodity dashboards, PFSA is truly at the forefront of this revolution, a revolution that is transforming how PFSA does business and that promises improved medicine availability throughout Ethiopia.

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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