



## Success Story

# Uganda MOH and USAID | DELIVER PROJECT Encourage Supportive Supervision



An NGO health clinic nurse (on left) and a project logistics coordinator discuss the management of health commodities at her site.

**Supportive supervision effectively addresses key logistics challenges at facilities.**

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Supportive supervision is a process that guides and encourages staff to optimize their work performance. This two-way communications process requires that supervisors work hand-in-hand with supervisees to establish goals, monitor objectives, and identify problems or weaknesses. This process must also include a way to recognize staff when they reach a high performance level. During supportive supervision, the supervisor assesses staff performance, provides feedback, and identifies opportunities for improvement, all within a supportive environment.

The smooth transition of commodities from one level to another, prior to reaching the facility, will help to ensure the continuous commodity availability at the health facility-level. Because all the required logistics data originates at the health facilities and the health workers are responsible for the integrity of the data, strong logistics management and well-trained health facility workers are both essential to meet this goal. Therefore, it is crucial that health workers receive regular, appropriate training; they should know how to do their jobs and be comfortable with their logistics responsibilities, such as calculating and ordering resupply quantities from the National Medical Stores (NMS).

Most Ugandan health workers have been trained in at least some aspects of logistics management. However, because of high staff turnover, knowledge gaps remain. Also, some health workers who have had training are not directly involved in the day-to-day activities at the health facilities. These training gaps have negatively impacted the logistics system; frequently, because health facility personnel have not been trained to correctly calculate quantities, they place incorrect orders. This results in stockouts and expiries, which leads to a failure to meet clients' needs. Knowledge gaps also contribute to poor logistics information reporting rates. Too often, logistics reports are submitted late, are inaccurately completed, or both.

To address these challenges in a practical manner, the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT supports the Ministry of Health by providing supportive supervision. During a health facility visit, to ensure that they cover all areas of logistics management, the supervisors target districts for follow-up and perform visits, following the supply chain to reach the lowest-level health facilities.

During each visit, the supervisor identifies and addresses the challenges unique to each health facility, either by immediate on-the-job training (OJT), or by forwarding their concern to the relevant authority. District officials are debriefed after each supportive supervision visit, including key action recommendations.

Facility interventions have resulted in successful outcomes:

- Limited storage capacity at facilities improved after guidance was given on how to effectively use space. In some cases, districts contributed resources to improve shelving and reorganize stores.
- Many districts have limited options for transporting health commodities from the district to the health facilities. Competing priorities for vehicles can lead to delays in distributing the commodities, sometimes by more than a month. This situation is often further aggravated by the lack of fuel and the availability of just one functioning vehicle for all transport needs. Some districts have decided that when supplies are received from the NMS, the distribution of medicines should take priority over all other district activities.
- On-the-job training for filling orders and maintaining stock cards is offered to almost all facilities where supportive supervision is offered. Stock cards are provided during supervision to those facilities lacking sufficient funds to purchase them from the NMS and to facilities that did not consider using stock cards a priority, thus, had not purchased them.
- Placing orders was the greatest challenge for all facilities. Project staff provided OJT on ordering donated/full supply items, especially contraceptives. The project provided NMS order forms to health facilities when the central level was unable to resupply facilities with order forms.

District health officials are encouraged to conduct supportive supervision; the project is empowering them to do so. Previously, some health facilities had not received supportive supervision from the district in more than a year, so the need was clear. Supportive supervision is also an opportunity for supervisors to experience the challenges faced by health facilities and health workers and collaborate to identify practical strategies to address them.

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