

Developing Commodity Procurement Support for the Ethiopia PMTCT Program

Background

Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) and antiretroviral therapy (ART) services require a reliable supply of medicines and commodities. Rational Pharmaceutical Management (RPM) Plus and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) carry out drug procurement for U.S. government-supported PMTCT program sites in Ethiopia. The goal of procurement support in Ethiopia is to strengthen existing structures and improve availability of supplies at the facility level.

Assessment of PMTCT Program Sites

Site assessments were carried out at 23 sites and looked at pharmacy and laboratory services, regional and district authorities and supply systems, and the parastatal wholesaler, PHARMID. RPM Plus also assessed the availability of pharmacy and laboratory commodities required for comprehensive PMTCT and PMTCT Plus services.

Findings

Public health facilities receive their supplies through three main channels—

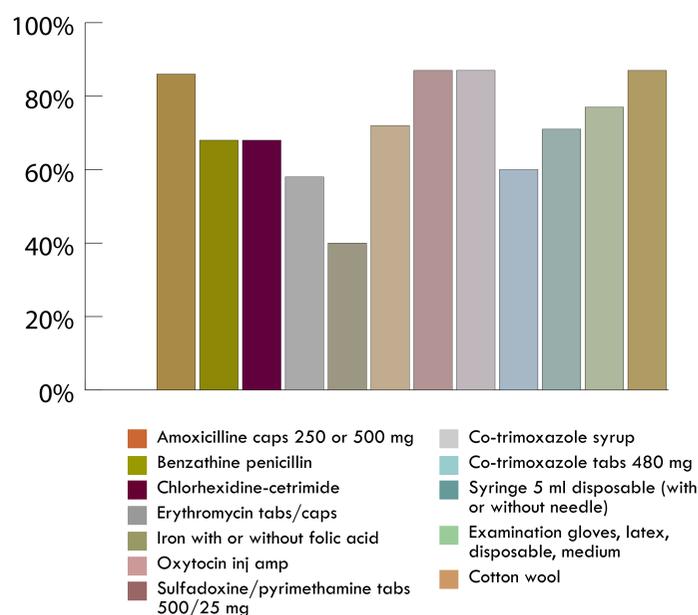
- Purchases from regional budget allocations
- Ethiopian Ministry of Health: Supplies provided free to the facilities and patients at a national level for specific programs
- Essential drug kits: Annually procured from World Bank funds

Interviews with facility health staff revealed that facilities use their budgets to procure essential drugs, with a priority given to life-saving drugs such as antibiotics and antimalarials. Other drugs and supplies are less likely to be purchased, either because they are not considered a priority or because they are too expensive. However, these commodities are sometimes provided through special programs.

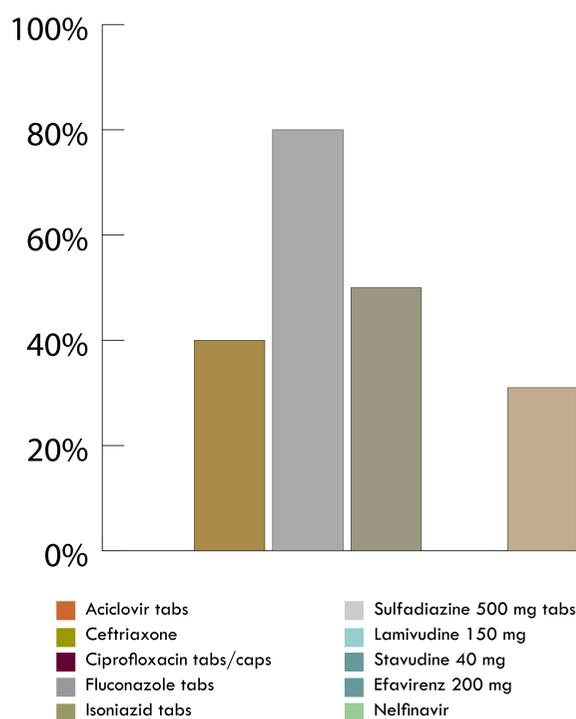
Managerial issues also caused drug supply problems. The RPM Plus assessment corroborated prior government assessment findings in the sector. Constraints and challenges identified include—

- Shortage and high attrition rate of professional staff
- Limited management capacity at zonal, district, and health facility levels
- Inadequate inventory control and weak monitoring and evaluation system, resulting in overstock, stock-outs, and expiry of certain products
- Limited quality assurance of imported or locally manufactured drugs due to shortage of human resources, weak information system, and lack of quality control equipment
- Periodic shortage of essential drugs due to lack of reliable consumption and/or morbidity data for procurement
- Irregular updating of inventory management tools such as stock cards or bin cards
- Inadequate storage, equipment, and handling capacity in pharmacies and laboratories, compromising product security and safety
- Lack of standard operating procedures, current reference materials, and manuals for use at health facilities
- Lack of space at pharmacies to ensure confidentiality for testing, counseling, and treatment

Availability of a Tracer Set of Essential Supplies



Availability of a Tracer Set of PMTCT Plus & ART Commodities



Proposed Implementation Plan

RPM Plus provides procurement support according to a staggered approach, with core supplies provided in the first phase, followed by a wider range of commodities later, together with strengthened management information systems and monitoring. Procurement should emphasize HIV-testing materials, drugs inaccessible in the local market, and commodities to strengthen prenatal care.

Planned interventions to address the recommended areas include assistance in quantification for procurement, in-service training, quality assurance, storage improvements, inventory control, record keeping and reporting, and development of manuals and standard operating procedures.

Creating Strong Information Links between PMTCT Program Activities and PMTCT Commodity Supply Activities

Good record keeping and information management are key to improving quantification of requirements as well as supply management, which will ultimately lead to better pharmaceutical procurement practice. The planned actions for improving record keeping include—

- Link service provision records with supplies, which will strengthen reporting of PMTCT services (see below table)
- Put in place an active stock management system and ensure availability of basic tools (e.g., stock cards, bin cards, inventory status reports, adverse drug reaction reports) for all PMTCT products at the sites
- Institute a quarterly reporting system for PMTCT product consumption and stock status

Facility Records Recommended for Calculating Supplies (Select List)

Facility records	Supplies
Number of prenatal care visits	Examination gloves, urine sticks, iron
Number of pregnant women tested	Rapid HIV test kits, Vacutainer
Number of pregnant women tested HIV-positive	Confirmatory tests for HIV
Number of women receiving ARV prophylaxis	Nevirapine
Consumption recorded at pharmacy dispensary	Streptomycin, aciclovir, sulfadoxine/pyrimethamine

Training Pharmacy Clerks to Improve Record Keeping and Reporting

A functioning inventory management system is required to prevent stock-outs. For the introduction of PMTCT services, pharmacy staff from the PMTCT implementation sites have been trained in PMTCT inventory management. Scarcity of pharmaceutical personnel presents a challenge to keeping up with the continuous demand for accurate recording and reporting. Pharmacy clerks, who are available in greater numbers in the labor pool, will be trained at facilities where pharmacy staff is in short supply.

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Availability of a Tracer Set of PMTCT Commodities

