



USAID | DELIVER PROJECT

Success Story

The USAID | DELIVER PROJECT Improves Patient Access to Essential Medicines in Zambia



A health center patient receives medication.

USAID | DELIVER PROJECT 2009

“[There is] overwhelming evidence that the interventions have had a positively significant increase in drug availability.”

—Dr. Kapembwa Simbao,
Minister of Health

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In Zambia, critical medicines and health supplies for malaria, family planning, and opportunistic and sexually transmitted infections (OI/STI) often do not reach the people who need them most.

For years, health facilities throughout the country had a continuous shortage of almost all essential medicines. “In the past, we used to get a lot of prescriptions without access to actual medication,” said Mwansa Kasonde, a patient from Kasama. “They [the pharmacists] would tell us to go and buy from drug stores whose price was exorbitant.”

In 2009–2010, with funding and support from USAID and the World Bank, the Ministry of Health (MOH), through Medical Stores Ltd., collaborated with the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT to find a solution. The partners initiated a logistics system pilot project to cost-effectively improve the availability of lifesaving drugs and other essential products at health facilities. The pilot project compared two distribution models in randomly selected peri-urban and rural districts, for one year.

The pilot project was a great success. For most products there was a significant increase in the number of days that stock was available, compared to those in the control districts who were using the existing system. For example, stockouts of antimalarial medicines were reduced from 48 to 8 percent. “Drug availability has improved tremendously, particularly for antimalarial drugs and antibiotics,” said Oscar Bwalya, pharmacy technician at Mungwi Rural Health Center. “We have the ability to do a physical count and order according to demand. This has ensured access to a variety of medicines by our community.”



PRESIDENT'S MALARIA INITIATIVE



As part of the pilot project, 646 personnel from more than 350 health facilities in the pilot districts received logistics training to learn the procedures for the new systems. “The essential medicines pilot built the capacity of health center staff,” said Dr. Mwanza, a district medical officer. “The logistics training of all district and health center/health post staff indeed brought empowerment, which has been illustrated by the high reporting rates.”

Senior members of the MOH praised the results of the essential medicines supply chain pilot and stated their commitment to scale up the successful model to all of Zambia’s 73 districts. “[There is] overwhelming evidence that the interventions have had a positively significant increase in drug availability,” said Minister of Health Kapembwa Simbao. “Scale-up of these interventions is key in strengthening the supply chain management systems in-country.”

A nationwide implementation of the new essential medicines supply chain system will ensure patients access to lifesaving medicines and health supplies; it will take approximately two and a half years to complete.

By scaling up the pilot project throughout Zambia—

- 27,000 child deaths from malaria could be averted by 2015, reducing the child mortality rate due to malaria by as much as 37 percent
- maternal and child health and OI services will dramatically improve
- the number of unwanted pregnancies will be reduced drastically, and more children will be spaced appropriately, leading to healthier mothers and children.

The USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, Task Order 1, 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.

The USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, Task Order 3, is funded by USAID, implemented by John Snow, Inc., and supports USAID’s implementation of malaria prevention and treatment programs by procuring, managing, and delivering high-quality, safe, and effective malaria commodities; providing on-the-ground logistics capacity, technical assistance, and pharmaceutical management expertise; and offering technical leadership to strengthen the global supply, demand, and financing of malaria commodities.

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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