



Success Story

Ethiopian Pharmacists Master the Complex Supply System for a Large Teaching Hospital



USAID | DELIVER PROJECT 2011

Fikadu Nmane, pharmacist and head of the store, oversees the orders at Hawassa Teaching Hospital.

With training and support from Ethiopia's Pharmaceuticals Fund and Supply Agency and the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, the hospital pharmacists can now fill orders the same day and sometimes in less than a few hours.

MAY 2011

This publication was produced for review by the U.S. Agency for International Development. It was prepared by the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, Task Order 4.

Hawassa Teaching Hospital is the main teaching hospital serving a region of 15 million people in Southern Ethiopia. Its pharmaceutical store is clean and orderly with every bit of space efficiently utilized. The inventory recordkeeping system is highly accurate. Skilled staff track stock levels of several hundred drugs with specialized software. Every day, as many as 6 of the 27 wards at the hospital are scheduled to calculate their supply needs and bring their orders to the central pharmacy store.

Thanks to their training from Ethiopia's Pharmaceuticals Fund and Supply Agency and the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, the pharmacists can now fill orders the same day and sometimes in less than a few hours. And very importantly, the pharmacists have the expertise to monitor stock levels, predict needs for the coming months, and avoid costly emergency orders.

A USAID | DELIVER PROJECT specialist in the region collaborates with the pharmacists on problem solving and strategic planning. "Requests from the wards change, and if the drug budget is limited, we have to help them prioritize their needs," says Head Pharmacist Alula Tadesse. "We help them find what will help their patients most under the circumstances."

The current state of the pharmacy warehouse is a sharp contrast to how it was before the improvements began. The pharmacists did their best under difficult circumstances. They did not have a systematic recordkeeping system, and the fill rate on orders from the hospital wards was problematic. Orders were processed slowly; some products were given in limited quantities or not at all, because the pharmacy was completely stocked out. At the same time, some drugs had to be destroyed because there was low demand for them and they had gone past their shelf life.

Currently, there are no expired drugs in the store, and a high percentage of the hundreds of inventory items is available. Using the new Integrated Pharmaceutical Logistics System, the pharmacists calculate orders for hundreds of products from a hub warehouse, according to the changing needs of all the hospital wards. The pharmacists include a percentage to cover increased demand, but they avoid surpluses and overstocks.

The pharmacists still face challenges, however. The pharmaceutical needs of the 27 wards of the teaching hospital keep increasing, both in quantity and in variety. Medical protocols are updated, and new programs are introduced. New shelving procured through the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT helped maximize the available space, but the pharmaceutical store is no longer adequate in size. In the not too distant future, an expansion will be necessary. The physicians and nurses of the teaching hospital have high expectations from the pharmacists, so they are busy working on strategies to keep up with the demands of the coming years.

The USAID | DELIVER PROJECT, Task Order 4, 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 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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