OPHID TRUST

TECHNICAL BRIEF:
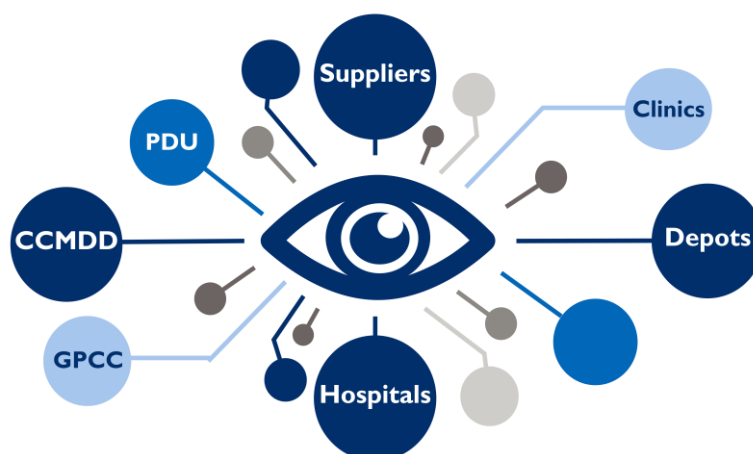# NATIONAL SURVEILLANCE CENTRE

GLOBAL HEALTH SUPPLY CHAIN PROGRAM – TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Global Health Supply Chain Program – Technical Assistance (GHSC-TA) provides technical assistance to the South African government to strengthen public health systems and supply chains to advance an AIDS-free generation, increase medicine availability, and contribute to the achievement of universal health coverage.

The National Department of Health (NDOH) in South Africa is implementing an outcomes-based framework to improve medicine availability across the country. The National Surveillance Center (NSC) is integral to this process because the NSC monitors and analyzes the data used to inform NDOH's understanding of medicine availability. Data from the NSC can help to improve the availability of the life-saving medications used to treat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), and other diseases in public health care facilities by increasing visibility of the public health supply chain.

OBJECTIVES

Medicine availability is one of the main challenges to successful health supply chain management in South Africa. In 2015, the NDOH formed the NSC to provide visibility of medicine availability across all levels of the public health supply chain. The NSC supports the implementation of the Visibility and Analytics Network model to monitor medicine availability by visualizing the data that suppliers and health establishments provide in a way that can help to inform their medicine supply decision-making processes.

Data from various health establishments across the country is submitted to the NSC. Then, using a common set of metrics, the data is used to visualize and report on the status of medicine availability across the national supply chain, from suppliers to health establishments. This information allows the respective stakeholders to understand what actions they should take to ensure that they can meet patients' needs. By reducing stock shortages and contributing to improved medicine availability, the NSC supports improved availability of medicines and therefore improved health outcomes.

APPROACH AND KEY ACTIVITIES

In 2016, GHSC-TA partnered with NDOH to build upon and strengthen the NSC through a strong governance and results framework. GHSC-TA recognized the need to standardize monitoring of medicine availability throughout the supply chain. In response, the program reviewed the NDOH Strategy to Improve Medicine Availability (SIMA) to understand the department's strategic objectives and identify what measures should be taken for the NSC to support these objectives. Next, GHSC-TA developed national and provincial key performance indicators (KPIs) so that the information being submitted to the NSC was of a standard and consistent format. At the same time, GHSC-TA developed roles and responsibilities for the NSC and its provincial counterparts, as well as introduced standard operating procedures and process flows to make information-sharing more efficient.

The key way in which NSC data is shared with stakeholders is through NSC dashboards and the nominated NSC and Provincial Surveillance Centre (PSC) licensed users. GHSC-TA developed the dashboards as a way for the NSC and PSC licensed users to easily visualize and interpret the data on medicine availability and compare it to day-to-day operational performance as well as to allow for the timely escalation of medicine availability-related issues to the relevant stakeholders. Data on medicine availability is visible at all levels of the supply chain and can point to medicine supply challenges at the supplier, provincial depot, and health establishment levels.

GHSC-TA also created a training plan for users of the dashboards. The training included the navigation and use of the better-defined escalation protocol developed by GHSC-TA for communicating medicine availability-related challenges. In addition, the program increased the number of data sources available to the NSC to ensure that the dashboards captured a wider and more accurate picture of medicine availability in the country.

GHSC-TA continues to monitor and make improvements to the NSC dashboards. Now, formal and established NSC teams and their provincial counterparts generate accurate and timely reports about medicine availability that are communicated to the appropriate stakeholders in order to inform decision-making, allow for investigating and resolving medicine availability issues, and assist health establishments and suppliers to have medicines available where and when they are needed.

ACHIEVEMENTS

GHSC-TA's intervention and technical assistance to the NSC have resulted in the following improvements, strengthening the health supply chain in South Africa:

- Acceptance by the NDOH of 26 KPIs aligned with the SIMA to monitor performance of the public health supply chain, 11 of which are monitored through the NSC.

- Timely and accurate reporting of medicine availability from health establishments at the provincial level.

- Progress towards diligent review of NSC dashboards and proactive communication with stakeholders on challenges to the supply chain.

- Improved data visualization through addition of dynamic visuals, historical data, and trend analysis functions to the NSC dashboards.

- Increased number and quality of data sources that contribute to the NSC dashboards, including data on the medicine availability of 70 suppliers, 10 provincial warehouses, 581 hospitals, and 3,216 clinics, as well as on medicine availability at designated private sector providers that treat state patients from public health care facilities and remote pharmacy dispensing units.

- Proactive tracking of medicine availability and improved order management.

- Overall improvement in medicine availability.

LESSONS LEARNED

Accessing the NSC dashboards requires resources such as internet connectivity and named user licenses that may not be available to all stakeholders. In addition, although the KPIs have been standardized, the quality and quantity of the data being submitted to NSC varies from one province and health establishment to another, which impacts the accuracy of the NSC's reports. A complete, interconnected internet technology landscape and central management of a master data repository are both essential to the acquisition of consistent, high-quality data.

A strong governance framework and appropriate oversight is critical to working in a complex environment like the NSC. Standardized and agreed-upon KPIs that were aligned with the SIMA were

critical to the successful development and implementation of the NSC dashboards by enabling better visualization of performance and better-informed decision-making processes. Furthermore, constant feedback from stakeholders on these KPIs throughout the development process created a sense of collaboration against a backdrop of multiple interventions.