

UNFPA Supplies: Strengthening supply chains

Keeping the shelves stocked means no woman walks away empty-handed from her local family planning clinic or risks dying in childbirth for lack of medicine to stop heavy bleeding or treat infection. However, stocking these shelves is a complex task where national health systems are often weak in reaching remote areas and the women and girls who need these products most.

UNFPA is leading the global effort to ensure all individuals can access and use affordable, quality reproductive health supplies whenever they need them. This will mean fewer unintended pregnancies, fewer abortions, less maternal mortality, healthier families and healthier economies, even in the poorest countries.

UNFPA Supplies provides targeted support to governments and civil society organization (CSOs) to strengthen their supply chain management systems so that supplies reach users wherever and whenever they are needed. Although concentrated on reproductive health, UNFPA Supplies support is making a **big impact** on national supply chain systems in general: support through this Programme has helped countries to better understand and visualize their particular bottlenecks and ways of addressing them; to operationalize logistics management information systems (LMIS); and improve national capacity to manage national health supply chains, including through public-private partnerships (PPPs).

Fostering national ownership of supply chain management

UNFPA Supplies' support is founded on the principle that **sustainable** and long-term solutions can be successful only if they are country-led and -driven.

The Programme's support to strengthen supply chain management systems is focused on strengthening **national capacity** and **leadership** in key areas, including demand forecasting and procurement. Particular progress is being made:

- governments in all 46 focus countries are now participating in **demand forecasting**, and in 40 countries that demand forecasting is led by the government;
- in all but one country (Yemen), governments are participating in the **procurement planning** process, and in 29 countries these procurement processes are led by the government;
- 38 countries have a **national coordination mechanism** for demand forecasting and procurement planning.

UNFPA Supplies is continuing to work with national governments, CSOs and private sector to ensure *all 46* focus countries have strong, reliable procurement and supply chain processes in place, and explore locally-adapted, innovative ways of tracking and distributing reproductive health commodities.

Strengthening national capacity and expertise

UNFPA Supplies provides support to **integrate reproductive health supply issues into the curricula of training institutions**, including supply chain and logistics management.

- In 2014, 27 institutions received multisectoral support from UNFPA Supplies to integrate reproductive health supply issues into training curricula, and 7 more institutions benefited from international and regional partnerships facilitated by UNFPA Supplies to further integration.
- UNFPA Supplies also provides free-of-charge multilingual **e-learning courses** on procurement to external partners, and supports governments wishing to improve their capacity for procurement. The e-learning platform for training on procurement, has been used by around 300 individuals since its inception.

As a result of concerted efforts by UNFPA Supplies and partners, 43 countries have **trained national experts** in demand forecasting, and in 40 countries trained national experts in procurement are available.

A particular focus in 2016 will be to further knowledge and improve practice related to national forecasting, supply planning and procurement processes.

Strengthening supply chain management information systems

UNFPA Supplies assists countries with the operationalization of logistics management information systems to ensure visibility along the supply chain and stock monitoring. UNFPA Supplies has also developed a **supply chain management information tool** that, if and when appropriate within the local context, can be adapted and used by national governments.

In 2014, 39 countries have systems that track all reproductive health commodities, and in 31 of them, the systems are managed by governments. UNFPA Supplies is working with partners, including private sector, in the remaining countries to conduct comprehensive reviews of their LMIS and costed implementation plans for the upgrade of outdated systems.

A particular focus in 2016 will be updating knowledge of national staff in the 46 countries related to LMIS and other tools and approaches to reduce stock-outs of reproductive health supplies.

Sustained support is improving availability of reproductive health supplies

Availability of modern contraceptives is increasing at health centres at all levels in UNFPA Supplies focus countries, both in urban and rural areas. More modern contraceptive methods available means that clients' **choice is expanding**: exit surveys of clients conducted as part of health facility surveys in 20 countries show that on average 93.8 per cent of clients received the contraceptives of their choice.

The availability of **life-saving maternal medicines** is also increasing at all levels in UNFPA Supplies focus countries, and countries are progressing steadily towards the goal of full availability of seven life-saving maternal and contraceptive commodities at all service delivery levels.

Stock-outs of essential reproductive health supplies represent a breakdown in the procurement and supply chain end-to-end continuum. The impact of stock-outs is deadly and UNFPA Supplies works with countries to provide better visibility, understanding and capacity to **avert stock-outs**. Data show that the stock situation is improving both in urban and rural areas at health facilities at all levels.

Support to national supply chains: country case studies



Supply chain management innovations, Nepal

In 2012, Nepal became a UNFPA Supplies focus country, during which time it has begun to see a notable increase in use of modern contraception among married women from 43.2 per cent in 2011 to 47.1 per cent in 2014.

One area of support to Nepal by UNFPA Supplies has been in strengthening the supply chain. In Nepal, delays in supply are often due to complexities of public procurement procedures, as well as issues in

forecasting and monitoring.

With UNFPA support, Nepal is updating the national training package on basic logistics and supporting the use of a web-based LMIS. Capacity building efforts are reaching store-keepers, health workers, logisticians, medical recorders, and other key stakeholders. Through a public-private partnership, a local NGO has been contracted in two districts to quantify need, package and transport supplies, coordinate quarterly LMIS reporting, and organize supervisory visits every four months to each health facility.

In 2014, LMIS reporting increased to 100 per cent, while stock-outs decreased by 36 per cent compared with 2013.



From a “pull” to “push” supply chain model, Togo

A comprehensive analysis of Togo’s supply chain highlighted the limitations of its ‘pull’ model. Health workers could not easily get the supplies if and when needed, constrained by problems with quantification, transport costs to get to the nearest medical stores and cost-recovery models. Stock-outs were rampant and access to contraceptives suffered.

In view of this crisis and acute diagnosis, the Government of Togo, with support from UNFPA Supplies and other partners, successfully, tested in 2014, a ‘push’ model, and expanded this model nationwide in 2015. Now, instead of waiting for health facilities to place their orders, a private operator contracted by the Central Medical store, checks facilities’ stock levels, replenishes as needed, and distributes a basket of health supplies, including contraceptives.



Public-private partnership for supply and service monitoring, Cameroon

When stock data were collected by hand, shortages were common. Months could pass before monitoring reports reached the central warehouse and supplies were replenished in rural clinics. Using cell phones, health facility workers now send instant updates to a central database.

What used to take months now only takes days. ‘SMS for Life’ is a public-private partnership programme to monitor the availability of contraceptives and other health commodities in the 22 health districts where UNFPA works. It will also monitor the delivery of services for family planning, maternal health and for victims of gender-based violence. Weekly SMS text messages are sent from remote locations where landlines and Internet connections are not available, then compiled into a database that highlights facilities in need of new supplies.

Enhanced visibility of availability and stocks of reproductive health supplies

UNFPA Supplies **leads the global efforts** to improve visibility on the stock levels and availability of contraceptives and maternal health medicines in the countries where it operates. Every year UNFPA Supplies collects a **comprehensive set of data** through its annual health facility survey, which was conducted in 27 countries in 2014, and it is being scaled up to reach the 46 focus countries in 2015.

The survey is designed to gather information about the **availability** of contraceptives and maternal health medicines in health facilities at **all levels, both in urban and rural areas**. It also provides information about the **capacity and training needs** of health workers for the provision of long-acting reversible methods (contraceptive implants and IUDs). In addition, the surveys are a privileged source of information to assess the **quality of the reproductive health services** provided in health facilities as well as client satisfaction with the contraceptives and services received.

Global coordinated supply planning to avert stock-outs

As the **largest global procurer of contraceptives**, UNFPA Supplies is a key partner, together with USAID in ensuring that the global procurement and supply of contraceptives is coordinated, so that countries are well stocked of much needed commodities.

The Coordinated Supply Planning (CSP) group facilitates **coordination** among the two key procurers of family planning commodities, UNFPA and USAID. Through the CSP group, **joint UNFPA–USAID forecasts** are developed for use in production planning, resource advocacy, contract negotiation, supply allocation, and other functions. It also facilitates UNFPA–USAID **supply orders coordination** and country data sharing, to help ensure rational allocation of products and avert stock-outs.

The Coordinated Assistance for Reproductive Health Supplies (CARhs) group is a partnership of donors collaborating to promote country ownership of supply management through increased **supply chain visibility and coordination** in order to prevent and resolve contraceptive supply crises. Although not a substitute for in-country coordination, CARhs provides a **safety net** for when emergencies arise and serves as an information-sharing mechanism between donors and countries.

Supporting a more efficient procurement of contraceptives

UNFPA works diligently to improve the quality and prices for the widening variety of products it provides. Through its market shaping efforts, improvements in forecasting and planning, and working with suppliers, UNFPA achieves better prices. In 2014, UNFPA was able to **reduce prices for key contraceptives on 63 per cent of items** and maintains lower prices than other major public sector procurers.

UNFPA is also an active participant in the Implant Access Programme, a multi-stakeholder initiative which has resulted in the reduction of the price of contraceptive implants by up to 50 per cent in recent years – effectively doubling the quantity of implants provided.

Further, national governments and NGOs can take advantage of **AccessRH**, UNFPA's **third-party procurement and information service** for reproductive health commodities. AccessRH provides access to UNFPA's negotiated prices and allows for shorter lead-times to its growing number of clients, so that governments and NGOs can **maximize the resources invested** in reproductive health.

For more information visit

<http://www.unfpa.org/unfpa-supplies>