

Securing Ugandans' Right to Essential Medicines

The U.S. Agency for International Development recently awarded Management Sciences for Health's (MSH) Center for Pharmaceutical Management a five-year, \$39 million cooperative agreement to implement the Securing Ugandans' Right to Essential Medicines (SURE) Program. SURE's mandate is to strengthen the national pharmaceutical supply system to ensure that Uganda's population has access to quality essential medicines and health supplies. To achieve this goal, SURE's objectives are to—

- Improve Uganda's policy, legal, and regulatory framework to produce pharmaceutical supply chain stability and sustainability
- Improve capacity and performance of central government entities, especially the National Medical Stores, to carry out their supply chain management responsibilities
- Improve capacity and performance of districts, health subdistricts, and implementing partners in their supply chain management roles

SURE Program Partners

Euro Health Group will provide expertise in addressing policy and regulatory issues

Fuel Group/Pharmaceutical Healthcare

Distributors will focus on supply chain logistics process and infrastructure design

Makerere University and the Infectious Disease Institute will help implement pharmaceutical management training

The SURE Program will build on past achievements of DANIDA, Supply Chain Management System, DELIVER, Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems, and other pharmaceutical sector support programs and will require an extraordinary amount of coordination and collaboration with every stakeholder in the pharmaceutical sector.

Integrating the government's vertical public health programs and the laboratory supply chain into one system will require the active participation of donors, Ministry of Health programs, U.S. government implementing partners, and other stakeholders. Coordinating mechanisms, stakeholder involvement, and active joint planning processes will aim to build national and local ownership, avoid duplication, and ensure consistency with existing policies. The key to garnering support for SURE is to operate under principles of complete transparency in planning and implementing interventions.

The basic premise for the program's technical interventions is the need to identify options to correct policy and finance deficits, strengthen the supply chain systems at central and district levels, and develop human capacity to manage the reformed supply chain systems. Therefore, the first step will be to conduct an options analysis to identify policy and finance reforms needed to integrate the supply chain and make it more efficient.

The analysis will combine three activities—political mapping, evaluation of how the system is performing and how much access citizens have to essential medicines, and the use of a unique total cost analysis tool to assess operating costs and



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Working to ensure that Uganda's population has access to quality essential medicines and health supplies by strengthening the national pharmaceutical supply system.

efficiency in the supply chain. The options analysis will define the specific changes needed to remove roadblocks, determine the feasibility of proposed changes, and provide the basis to obtain necessary commitments to change from stakeholders. To strengthen the pharmaceutical supply system, SURE will integrate Uganda's currently fragmented supply chain and establish a pharmaceutical management information system that provides full transparency to minimize medicine stock-outs and waste.

In addition, SURE will determine which current practices are working well and standardize best practices at the different levels of the health system from the central level down to health care facilities. The National Medical Stores, as the planned hub of the supply chain, will receive special attention, including minor remodeling and operational adjustments, to address infrastructure and design flaws within its warehouses.

SURE will base its capacity building process on MSH's Monitoring-Training-Planning (MTP) approach, which has been applied widely in Africa and has already proven effective in improving pharmaceutical management practices in Uganda. The MTP methodology strengthens human resource capacity by giving local staff members the skills and tools to identify, analyze, and tackle problems using existing resources. SURE will also work to strengthen Drug Management Supervision capacity for supply chain management and financial management at the facility level.

At the national and local levels, SURE will focus its capacity building efforts on quantification and procurement, warehousing, distribution, financial management, use of management information systems, and organizational management and strategic planning for senior managers. Performance-based incentive programs and a facility accreditation scheme will reinforce capacity-building efforts and encourage individuals and organizations to improve pharmaceutical and financial management practices at all levels.

By the program's end, the supply chain management capacity will be built up at all levels of Uganda's health system, and its parallel supply systems will be integrated as a national system. The SURE Program will have supported the development of a functional supply chain system, serving Uganda's central and local health care levels with the necessary tools, approaches, skills, and coordinating mechanisms that will allow Uganda's government to maintain and expand on these investments.