

SIAPS Benin End of Project Report

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Systems for Improved Access
to Pharmaceuticals and Services

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAME	National Medical Stores
DNSP	Directorate of Public Health
DPMED	Department of Pharmacy, Medicines, and Diagnostics
DRZs	Depots Répartiteurs des Zones
EUV	end use verification
LMIS	logistics management information system
MOH	Ministry of Health
NSCA	national supply chain assessment
SIAPS	Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services
USAID	US Agency for International Development

BACKGROUND

Despite various initiatives that have been implemented in Benin to improve pharmaceutical supply management, the public health sector continues to show major gaps in terms of governance of the pharmaceutical management system. Operational gaps include weaknesses in institutional and human resource capacity, the logistics management information system (LMIS), and in the capacity to monitor medicine availability and use. These gaps continue to contribute to the proliferation of substandard and falsified medicines and often lead to stock-outs and/or overstock of commodities, risk of expiries, and inappropriate use of medicines with negative consequences on health outcomes.

Following the 2014 outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, the US Agency for International Development's (USAID) mission in Benin requested that the Systems for Improved Access to Pharmaceuticals and Services (SIAPS) Program provide technical assistance to Benin's Ministry of Health (MOH) with the overall objective of improving the country's capacity for effective pharmaceutical system management.

In addition, USAID assigned SIAPS a specific scope of work for Ebola-related interventions that included:

- Providing technical assistance to the MOH and the National Medical Stores (CAME) to plan the quantification, forecasting, purchase, storage, prepositioning, and distribution of Ebola-related commodities and equipment
- Coordinating with other donors and nongovernmental organizations that are providing Ebola-related commodities and equipment to ensure a cohesive national response

KEY INTERVENTIONS

To meet USAID requirements and Benin MOH expectations, SIAPS used its pharmaceutical systems strengthening approach to identify and implement strategies and interventions that led to a coordinated and sustainable improvement in the critical components of a pharmaceutical system, making health commodities available to achieve better health outcomes.

The SIAPS objectives in Benin were to help the country:

- Strengthen pharmaceutical sector leadership and governance
- Build human resource and institutional capacity for more sustainable medicines supply management
- Address information needs to support decision making in pharmaceutical management

SIAPS-supported Activities

By the end of SIAPS, the following activities had been conducted:

- MOH support:
 - Reviewed the legal status of zonal depots (Depots Répartiteurs des Zones (DRZs)) for legislation granting autonomy
 - Conducted end user verification (EUV) surveys and analyzed the findings for decision making
- Department of Pharmacy, Medicines, and Diagnostics (DPMED) support:
 - Assessed the national medicine supply chain management system
 - Conducted a national stakeholder validation workshop of national supply chain assessment (NSCA) results
 - Helped disseminate NSCA findings at the department level
 - Developed a national supply chain strategic plan
 - Strengthened the medicines registration process and regulatory information management system
 - Assisted the DPMED and stakeholders in quantification exercises for all health commodities

In February 2016, SIAPS started the implementation of Ebola-related activities through its support to the DPMED, CAME, and the Directorate of Public Health (DNSP). Priority interventions in this area included support to the MOH to:

- Validate the quantification of Ebola commodities
- Conduct supportive supervision for the transparent management, appropriate storage, and distribution of Ebola commodities to health facilities nationwide
- Train Ebola LMIS users

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Strengthened Pharmaceutical-sector Leadership and Governance

Supported the DPMED to Conduct the NSCA

In April 2015, SIAPS conducted a preassessment visit to Benin to clarify the objectives and scope of work with the USAID mission, MOH, and other key actors. In August 2015, Benin's supply chain management system for medicines and other health products was assessed using the Capability Maturity Model diagnostic tool. This assessment identified the main strengths and weaknesses of Benin's medicine supply chain and highlighted areas where corrective interventions were needed to improve the overall system. The Department of Pharmacy, Medicines, and Diagnostics' willingness to address this issue and the involvement of supply chain management stakeholders and donors were essential contributing factors to the success of this activity.

Supported the DPMED to Conduct a National Stakeholder Validation of the NSCA Results

After data related to the NSCA were collected and analyzed, SIAPS supported the DPMED to organize a one-day workshop in October 2015 at which key findings were presented to MOH stakeholders at the national level. Comments from participants were subsequently integrated into the first draft of the technical report.

Supported the DPMED to Organize Departmental-level Dissemination of the NSCA Results

Following the national-level validation workshop on key findings from the assessment, SIAPS supported the DPMED to disseminate these findings at the department level through local workshops. In December 2015, health districts, health zones, hospitals, and health centers were presented with the findings, and their input and feedback were incorporated into the final assessment results document.

Supported the DPMED to Develop a National Supply Chain Strategic Plan

Based on findings from the assessment, SIAPS started work with the DPMED in February 2017 to develop a strategic plan as a way to provide appropriate guidance to all medicine supply chain management actors and harmonize the implementation of health system strengthening interventions. In April 2016, a revised version of the supply chain assessment that incorporated input from Departmental Health Divisions was submitted for validation by stakeholders and donors, who approved both the national supply chain assessment and the national strategic plan.

Supported the MOH to Review the Legal Status of DRZs for Legislation Granting Autonomy

Although DRZs are the primary customers of the CAME and therefore play a key role in the distribution of health products to health service delivery points in Benin, their legal status was ambiguous and needed to be addressed. To do this, SIAPS hired a local consultant to review the legal status of these entities and make recommendations that could lead to an MOH decree granting legal status to DRZs. A draft of the DRZ legal status was developed and validated as a final version during a one-day workshop. A formal decree for the legal status of DRZs was still pending when SIAPS closed.

Supported the DPMED to Strengthen the Medicines Registration Process and Regulatory Information Management System

The medicines registration system of the DPMED, which is the national medicines regulatory authority in Benin, had insufficient capacity to evaluate and monitor the security, efficacy, and quality of medicines and other health products. To address these concerns, SIAPS conducted two assessments of the regulatory information management system and processes in place at the DPMED. The first assessment in November 2016 provided analysis as well as recommendations based on identified strengths and weaknesses.

In August 2017, the assessment findings were updated and a roadmap for next steps focused on the functionality and optimization of the existing electronic tool for medicines registration and related standard operating procedures (SOPs). As part of the improvement efforts, SIAPS procured a new server, and the equipment was installed and users connected for concurrent access and use.

Beginning in December 2017, the optimization of the medicines registration system continued with the following activities:

- Evaluating the current software system, SIGIP-ARP, and comparing it to Pharmadex
- Strengthening roles and responsibilities of staff involved in the medicines registration process
- Accelerating data entry into the database to address the backlog of registration application dossiers
- Finalizing the development of additional SOPs for medicines registration, including:
 - Receipt of application dossiers for marketing authorization of medicines
 - Screening of application dossiers (administrative review)
 - Evaluating and registering medicines (including recommendation by the technical committee and decision making by the commission)
 - Archiving and storing application dossiers and samples

Supported the MOH (DNSP) to Develop the LMIS Component of the SOP Manual for the Management of Ebola and other Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers Commodities

As part of the efforts to improve Benin's pharmaceutical governance and regulations and in collaboration with the USAID-funded Advancing Newborn, Child, and Reproductive Health (ANCRE) Program, SIAPS supported the DNSP to develop the LMIS component of the SOP manual for the management of Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers commodities. The SOP manual was validated in August 2017 and used to train store managers and health professionals on the management of Ebola commodities.

Build Human Resource and Institutional Capacity for More Sustainable Medicines Supply Chain Management

Supported the MOH to Validate the Quantification of Ebola Commodities

As part of its efforts to strengthen the capacity of individuals and organizations in the forecasting and supply planning of Ebola commodities, SIAPS supported the DPMED during FY 2016 to organize a three-day workshop for the quantification of Ebola commodities. The workshop was attended by donors, implementing partners, priority health programs, and members of the national committee for health products supply. The quantification results were validated in March 2017.

Provided Technical Assistance to the DPMED and Stakeholders to Improve Quantification for all Health Commodities

To address the lack of capacity and related tools for the quantification of health commodities, which had previously been identified as root causes of ineffective medicine forecasting and supply planning in Benin, SIAPS supported the DPMED and the national committee for health products supply in April 2016 to review the implementation of the existing quantification SOPs and identify process gaps and improvement interventions. An orientation on quantification was provided that included key quantification concepts, the primary quantification methods that could be used in the country, frequency of quantification and standardization of forecasting, and supply planning tools across the different health programs.

Supported the MOH to Train Ebola LMIS Users

Following the validation of the SOP manual for the management of commodities necessary to prevent and treat Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers, SIAPS supported the DNSP to train store managers and other health professionals on the use of the LMIS tools that were developed as part of the manual. Two training workshops were organized in Ouidah and Bohicon in September 2017, and 42 staff from 34 health districts were trained.

Address Information Needs to Support Decision Making in Pharmaceutical Systems

Supported the MOH to Conduct Supportive Supervision for Transparent Management, Appropriate Storage, and Distribution of Ebola Commodities to Health Facilities Nationwide

During FY 2016, SIAPS provided technical assistance to the MOH through the DNSP and the DPMED to visit health facilities and assess the availability and management of health commodities at Ebola sites. These visits were an opportunity to provide on-site capacity building to 27 stock managers and improve commodity management and the completeness and quality of the health management information systems, including data for the LMIS. Ebola products were distributed or reallocated among sites to avoid expiry, wastage, and stock-out.

For transparent management and appropriate storage of Ebola commodities, SIAPS supported the DNSP and DPMED to conduct two supportive supervision visits in July and October 2016 in collaboration with ANCRE.

Supported the MOH to Conduct EUV Surveys and Utilize the Findings for Decision Making

As per the requirements of the US President's Malaria Initiative, SIAPS conducted EUV surveys to track and report the availability of malaria health commodities and the adequacy of malaria case management. In July 2017, SIAPS supported the National Malaria Control Program to conduct an EUV survey in the Borgou and Alibori regions. The summary report was submitted to USAID in September 2017, and the findings were discussed by stakeholders and regional MOH officers during a one-day dissemination meeting in December 2017.

The second EUV survey was conducted in December 2017 in the Zou and Collines regions. Collaboration among SIAPS, the USAID-funded Accelerating the Reduction of Malaria Morbidity and Mortality Program, and the National Malaria Control Program was key to the success of this activity.

CHALLENGES

- Implementing multiple work plans simultaneously, particularly while the country was concurrently restricting its health system
- A lack of country office and a language barrier between the local consultant and supporting offices
- Insufficiently skilled and motivated regulatory and supply management personnel in the country's public health system

The Future of Pharmaceutical Systems Strengthening

As SIAPS closed, there was still a long way to go toward strengthening pharmaceutical system given the insufficient country ownership that limited the process of transitioning responsibilities. To continue pharmaceutical systems strengthening efforts, other USAID implementing partners are essential until country ownership increases. USAID funds are still needed to continue the country institutional capacity development and improve the overall pharmaceutical systems.

Table 1. Implementing Partners

Implementing Partners	Intervention(s)	Year(s)
ANCRE	Supported the MOH (DNSP) to develop the LMIS component of the SOP manual for the management of Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers commodities	2016–2017
	Supported the MOH to validate the quantification of Ebola commodities	2017
	Supported the MOH to conduct supportive supervision for transparent management, appropriate storage, and distribution of Ebola commodities to health facilities nationwide	2017
OCAL	Supported the MOH to validate the quantification of Ebola commodities	2017
ARM3	Supported the MOH to conduct EUV surveys and utilize the findings for decision making	2017

Table 2. Collaborating Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Intervention(s)	Year(s)
Direction de la Pharmacie, du Médicament et des Explorations Diagnostiques (National Medicines Regulatory Authority)	Supported the DPMED to conduct the NSCA	2015
	Supported the DPMED to conduct a national stakeholder validation of the NSCA results	2015
	Supported the DPMED to organize departmental-level dissemination of the NSCA results	2015
	Supported the DPMED to develop a national supply chain strategic plan	2016
	Supported the MOH to review the legal status of DRZs for legislation granting autonomy	2016

Challenges

Stakeholders	Intervention(s)	Year(s)
	Supported the DPMED to strengthen the medicines registration process and regulatory information management system	2016–2017
	Supported the MOH (DNSP) to develop the LMIS component of the SOP manual for the management of Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers commodities	2017
	Supported the MOH to validate the quantification of Ebola commodities	2017
	Supported the MOH to conduct supportive supervision for transparent management, appropriate storage, and distribution of Ebola commodities to health facilities nationwide	2016
Direction Nationale de la Sante Publique (National Department of Public Health)	Supported the MOH (DNSP) to develop the LMIS component of the SOP manual for the management of Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers commodities	2017
	Supported the MOH to validate the quantification of Ebola commodities	2017
	Supported the MOH to train Ebola LMIS users	2017
	Supported the MOH to conduct supportive supervision for transparent management, appropriate storage, and distribution of Ebola commodities to health facilities nationwide	2016
Centrale d'Achats des Médicaments Essentiels (Central Medical Stores)	Supported the DPMED to conduct the NSCA	2015
	Supported the DPMED to conduct a national stakeholder validation of the NSCA results	2015
	Supported the DPMED to organize departmental-level dissemination of the NSCA results	2015
	Supported the MOH to review the legal status of DRZs for legislation granting autonomy	2017
	Supported the MOH (DNSP) to develop the LMIS component of the SOP manual for the management of Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers commodities	2017
	Supported the MOH to validate the quantification of Ebola commodities	2017
	Supported the MOH to train Ebola LMIS users	2017
	Supported the MOH to conduct supportive supervision for transparent management, appropriate storage, and distribution of Ebola commodities to health facilities nationwide	2016
Programme National de Lutte contre le Paludisme (National Malaria Control Program)	Supported the DPMED to develop a national supply chain strategic plan	2016
	Supported the MOH to conduct EUV surveys and utilize the findings for decision making	2017
World Health Organization	Supported the DPMED to conduct the NSCA	2015
	Supported the DPMED to conduct a national stakeholder validation of the NSCA results	2015
	Supported the DPMED to organize departmental-level dissemination of the NSCA results	2015
	Supported the MOH (DNSP) to develop the LMIS component of the SOPs Manual for the management of Ebola and other viral hemorrhagic fevers commodities	2017