

Web-Based HIV/AIDS Information-Sharing Network

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A Need for Information Sharing

In response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, many donor programs for developing countries are targeting the supply and use of HIV/AIDS pharmaceuticals and other commodities. At the same time, the knowledge base for HIV/AIDS medicines is growing and changing, with information on the availability and prices of new therapeutic agents, recommended prevention and treatment guidelines, and adverse effects of newer agents in continuous flux.

It is critical that this dynamic information base be effectively catalogued, monitored, and shared, so that policy makers and program managers in donor organizations, recipient countries and institutions, and international support groups can make the most appropriate decisions and policies related to program funding and implementation.

After analyzing information needs, existing initiatives, and available options, Management Sciences for Health (MSH) determined that a Web-based information tracking system, centrally maintained and accessible to all stakeholders, was the preferred approach for managing this set of multifaceted, rapidly changing information. Synergy International Systems' off-the-shelf Web database and Web portal Intelligent Data Manager™ technology software was identified as the ideal platform on which to build the new tracking system, and was adapted to meet the information needs of HIV/AIDS donor and recipient organizations.

The tool now tracks information on the Rational Pharmaceutical Management (RPM) Plus Program's HIV/AIDS commodity procurement initiatives funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, monitoring the flow of medicines into 9 of the Plan's target countries. MSH staff coordinate entry of the data into the system and provide regular maintenance. Information related to HIV/AIDS initiatives funded by the World Bank and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria will be incorporated into the system as data becomes available.

Once the initial work has been evaluated, consideration will be given to expanding the database to provide information on additional HIV/AIDS donor programs and recipient countries; commodities information for other diseases (e.g., malaria); standard treatment guidelines; and tracking of the impact of donor programs through linkages to national health statistics databases.

Benefits of the System

Expected benefits from the use of the HIV/AIDS Commodities Tracking Tool include—

- **Creating awareness** of countries or regions where assistance is being adequately provided as well as areas where assistance may be needed
- **Diagnosing and averting problems** that may result from an overstock of pharmaceuticals or other commodities in regions lacking a functioning infrastructure to support the appropriate management and use of these products
- **Avoiding duplication of efforts** by donor organizations
- **Creating a centralized base for information sharing** to improve pharmaceutical and other health commodity management practices and related patient care
- **Improving estimates** of the number of patients potentially covered by projected purchases of HIV/AIDS-related pharmaceuticals and other commodities
- **Enhancing the ability** to determine whether proposed procurements are in line with national standard treatment guidelines

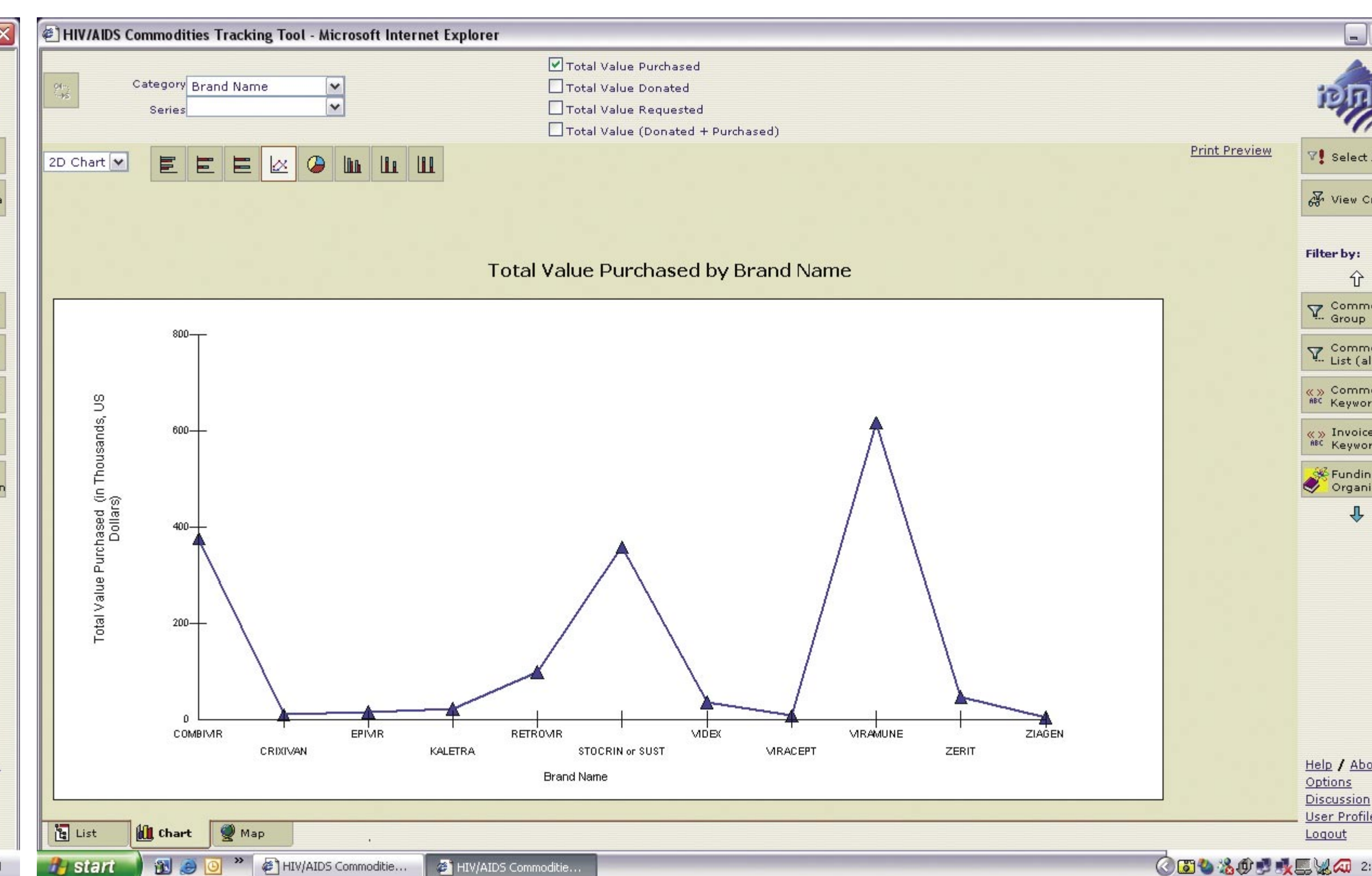
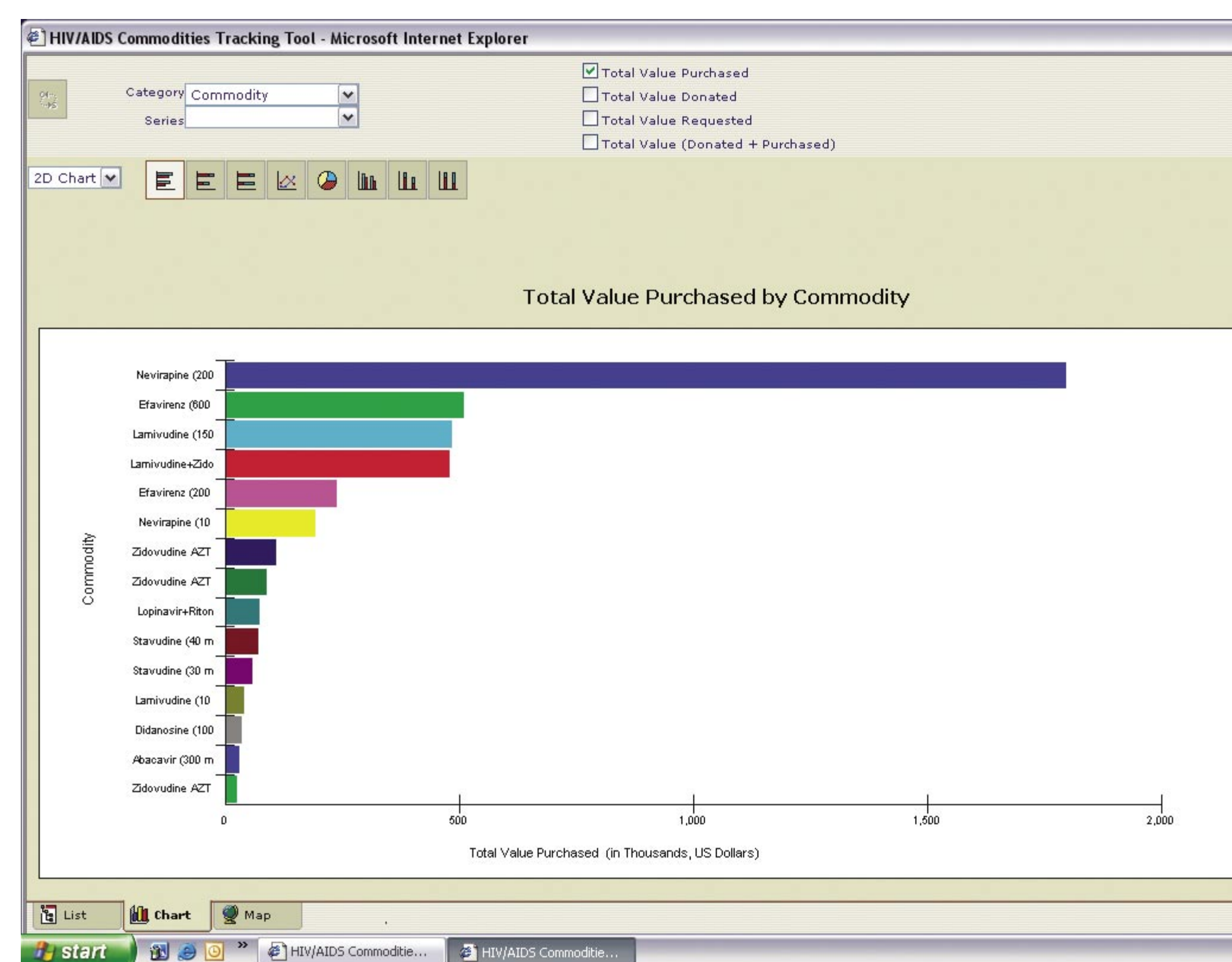
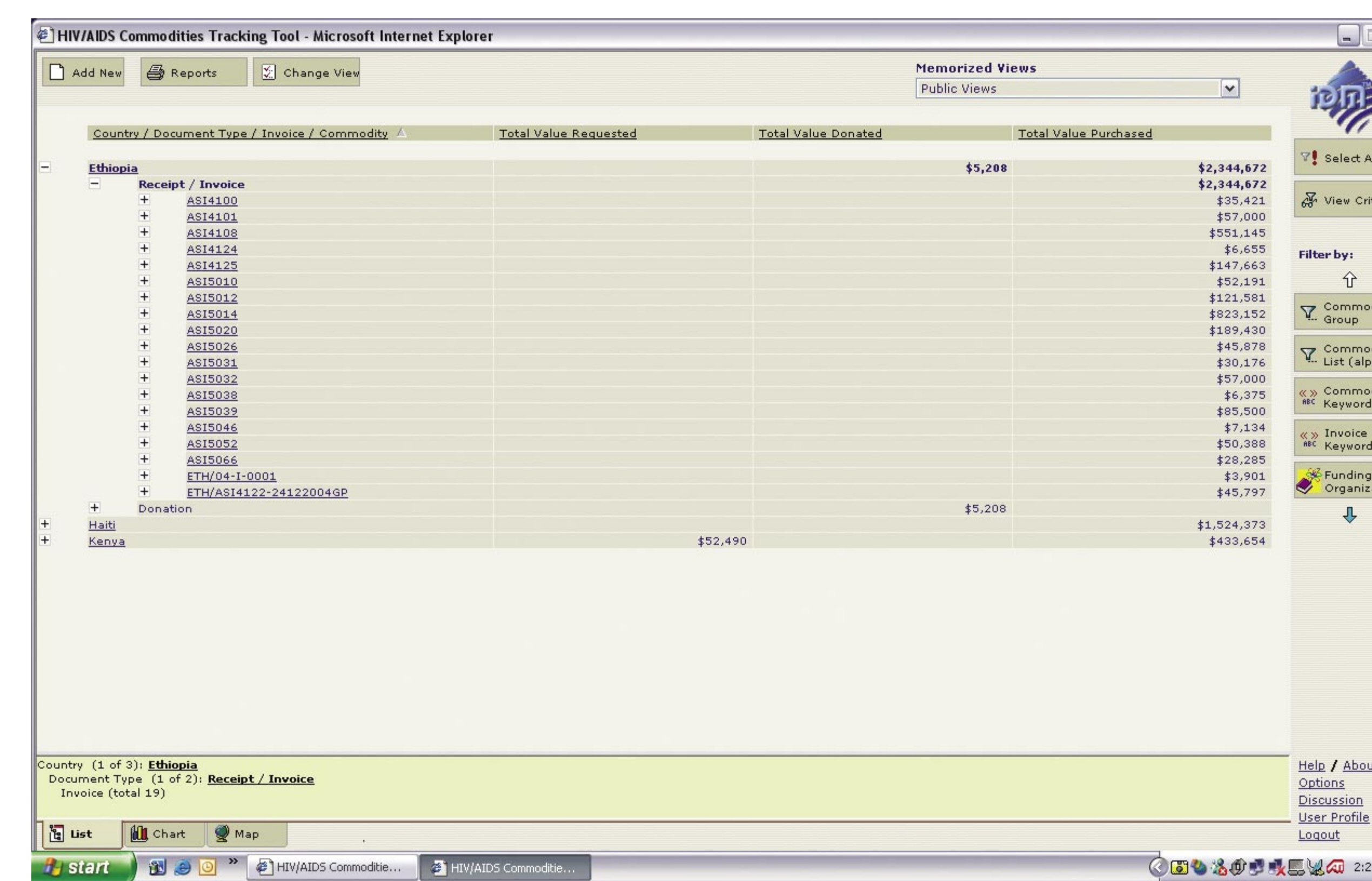
Access and Features

The database is Web based and can be accessed by users in disparate locations who have an Internet connection. The database is password protected. Additionally, permissions can be set for each user or a group of users, providing a means to control what information is seen and/or modified and by whom.

The user can customize the view of the screen to display any combination of data elements by grouping (country, commodity, brand name, manufacturer, commodity group, supplier, and individual invoice). The columns can also be changed to display other elements, such as brand name, country, data source, essential medicines, invoice number, product form, strength or purchased quantity.

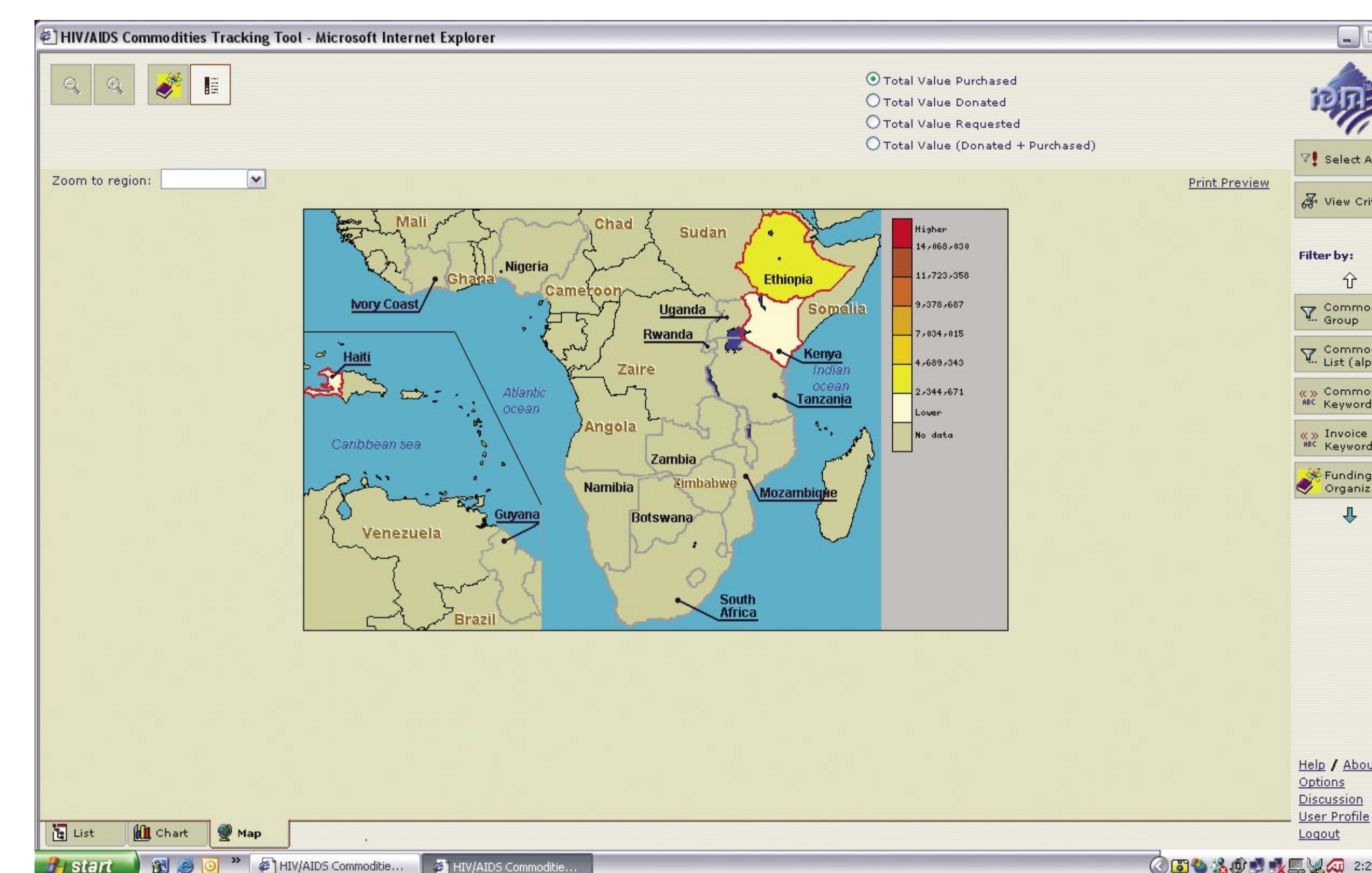
Individual invoices can be selected to disclose detailed product information (commodity, form, strength, quantity, and price per unit).

The query functionality of the database can be adapted according to user preference and priority by applying various filters, including commodity by group, commodity list, keyword search, data source, country, year, manufacturer, and wholesaler.



In addition to simply listing query results, the database can display any information pictorially. Three types of graphical presentation are available (i.e., line, pie, and bar graphs).

Users can select graphical data for various categories, including country, data source, commodity group, brand name, manufacturer, and supplier.



Information can be viewed as geographical representations (by selecting the map icon); for example, showing regions where each donor's initiative is involved. Organizational icons then represent the various donors.

Regional quantitative data may be viewed by clicking on the "scale" icon located in the top left corner and selecting the presentation of data (i.e., total requested, total purchased, total donated, total donated + purchased).

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