

## **ELECTRONIC TOOLS AND RESOURCES: Commodities Tracking Tool**

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**Problem:** In response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, many donor programs are targeting the supply and use of HIV/AIDS pharmaceuticals and other commodities in developing countries. 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 appropriate decisions related to program funding and implementation.

**Strategy for Change:** After analyzing information needs, existing initiatives, and available options, MSH determined that a Web-based information tracking system, centrally maintained and accessible to all stakeholders, was the best way to manage this multifaceted, rapidly changing information. Synergy International Systems' off-the-shelf Intelligent Data Manager™ software was identified as the ideal platform on which to build the new tracking system, and it was adapted to meet the information needs of HIV/AIDS donor and recipient organizations.

**Results:** The HIV/AIDS Commodities Tracking Tool (CTT) monitors the flow of HIV/AIDS medicines and other commodities arriving in countries in support of global HIV/AIDS initiatives. Specifically, the tool tracks information on the Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus (RPM Plus) Program's HIV/AIDS commodity procurement initiatives funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Until data collection and entry processes are refined and perfected, U.S.-based MSH staff will coordinate the system's data entry and provide regular maintenance; however, the long-term goal is for MSH country offices to handle data entry and maintenance.

Key features of the HIV/AIDS Commodities Tracking Tool—

- 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 (brand name, commodity, commodity group, country, donation received, funding organization, individual invoice, manufacturer, purchase order, supplier, and year). The columns can also be changed to display other elements, such as dates of donation, plan, or purchase order; delivered or donated quantities; delivery, product shipment, or document creation dates; grand total in units of all quantities received; quantities invoiced, ordered, or planned; and total U.S. dollar value of all products delivered, received, donated, planned, shipped, ordered.
- The user can select individual invoices, purchase orders, or donations to disclose detailed product information (commodity, form, strength, quantity, and price per unit).
- The user can adapt the query functionality of the database by applying various filters, including commodity by group, commodity list, keyword search, data source, country, year, manufacturer, and wholesaler.
- A variety of graphs, charts, and maps provide an illustrative view of the data and multiple methods of analysis.

**Anticipated Impact:** Expected benefits from using the CTT include—

- Identifying countries or regions where assistance is being adequately provided or where it may be needed
- Diagnosing and averting problems that may result from an overstock of pharmaceuticals
- 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
- Determining whether proposed procurements are in line with national standard treatment guidelines

**Activity Update (July 2008):** The RPM Plus Program had been using the Web-based Commodities Tracking Tool, developed with SEAM Program support, to track procurements of HIV/AIDS medicines purchased by USAID. With the transfer of most HIV/AIDS-related commodities procurement to the Partnership for Supply Chain Management, the tool is no longer needed for this purpose; however, MSH is investigating the possibility of using

the tool to track other procurements for other diseases (e.g., malaria) through the Strengthening Pharmaceutical Systems Program or expanding the database to include standard treatment guidelines and track the impact of donor programs through linkages to national health statistics databases.

**Next Steps:**

- Ensure that the software is still needed and that it is not currently replicated by another application.
- Identify and implement adaptations needed to expand the software's capability to track different disease areas.
- Demonstrate the application to various stakeholders and gain buy-in for its use as a primary coordinating mechanism for donor organizations and recipient countries.