The SAFEMed team has developed its fourth year annual implementation plan. With two years left under the five-year contract, project staff and consultants took time to reflect on the progress, challenges and accomplishments from the first three years of SAFEMed to propose activities that will accelerate momentum towards the project’s goal of ensuring that medicines are affordable, accessible, and reliable across Ukraine.

For the annual implementation plan to come together, numerous internal discussions as well as consultations with key stakeholders took place across time zones and oceans, both virtually and through face-to-face meetings, always in a constructive and comprehensive way.

The plan ensures alignment with the ambitious health reforms led by the Government of Ukraine. Essential to the success of the workplan development process were in-depth discussions on the proposed activities with the Ministry of Health (MOH), National Health Service of Ukraine, medical Central Procurement Agency, Health Technology Assessment department of the State Expert Center (SEC), and the Public Health Center. Subject to USAID’s approval, activities for the next project year (October 2020 – September 2021) will be carried out in partnership with local stakeholders at the central and regional levels, with special emphasis given to 12 PEPFAR-supported oblasts.
The Government of Ukraine is committed to institutionalizing the use of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) in Ukraine. HTA is a multi-disciplinary process to review health technologies and provide evidence on the value these technologies can deliver to patients, health systems, and society more broadly. The purpose is to inform decision-making in order to promote an equitable, efficient, and high-quality health system.

Following the establishment of the HTA department under the SEC in 2019, and in line with the HTA Roadmap conceptualized during the first National HTA Forum, a legal framework was needed for institutionalizing the HTA function in the pharmaceutical field. Between June-August 2020, the MOH initiated the development of a decree to regulate the HTA function in Ukraine with legal and technical support from the SAFEMed project. Mr. Igor Ivashchenko, Deputy Minister of Health of Ukraine on European Integration, emphasized the intention of the MOH to reorganize the HTA department as an independent regulatory body in order to perform the functions of state HTA in a transparent and sustainable manner. The draft HTA decree was available on the MOH website for public consultations through August 20, 2020. Moving forward, SAFEMed will continue to assist in the finalization of the decree, its respective orders, and guidelines that will lead to the establishment of a robust and transparent HTA function in Ukraine.

Additionally, SAFEMed provided technical and legal support to the MOH for the introduction of Managed Entry Agreements (MEA) into the process of public procurement of medicines. These arrangements between firms and healthcare payers will allow for coverage of new medicines while monitoring their effectiveness and safety in the best possible commercial conditions for the state. The tool is widely and successfully used in the European Union and best practices for its implementation were evaluated and selected for the development of this practice in Ukraine. Such approach minimizes risks at the implementation stage, as well as ensures further sustainability of the use of innovative procurement tools.