

## Pakistan's first supply chain management course tees off

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Designed to meet the needs of logisticians, policy-makers and public health managers of the public and private sectors alike, Pakistan's first certificate course on 'Supply Chain Management (SCM) of Health Commodities' was inaugurated at the Health Services Academy (HSA) here on Monday.

The ceremony was attended by deputy director of the USAID health office John Eyres, executive director of HSA Dr. Huma Qureshi, country director of USAID-funded Deliver Project Dr. Muhammad Tariq, international experts David Paprocki and Todd Dickens, HSA faculty, course participants, and representatives of partner NGOs.

The course is aimed at imparting knowledge about the basics concepts of SCM and their applications within the context of health and population development. It has been tailored to the challenges faced by Pakistan in terms of managing and streamlining the supply chain of health commodities, and imparts fundamentals skills in procurement, forecasting and quantification, and warehousing. The course will provide an opportunity for logistics staff to hone their skills on supply chain management and revolutionise health commodity management in the public sector.

Addressing the ceremony, John Eyres hoped that HSA would take this curriculum further and be the model public health institution in Pakistan towards developing a critical

mass of logisticians and supply chain experts. The participants of the course have been nominated by the provincial and regional health and population departments, based on specific criteria.

John highlighted the efforts being made by USAID to assist the federal agencies as well as the provincial and regional department of health and population in the post-devolution scenario. "In Pakistan the focus of supply chain and logistics is already filling the gaps towards making health products accessible in the central and farthest part of the country alike. Just around logistics and supply chain, USAID has provided more than \$120 million worth of technology, contraceptives and other health products; systems; hardware; and equipment since August 2009 through Deliver," he informed.

Other major contributions toward strengthening Pakistan's public sector logistics and supply chain include the design, development and implementation of a Logistics Management Information System (LMIS), which enables warehouses and district stores to track and communicate stock status along the supply chain, and thereby reduce stock-out situations.

With an almost \$3m investment, USAID has assisted Pakistan in the expansion and modernisation of the central warehouse in Karachi, which now has the ability to meet Pakistan's storage capacity for another 20-25 years. John informed that another \$2.5m is being spent by Deliver to finance one-year transportation

cost for all 143 districts. This assistance is closing the gap around product availability and accessibility at all levels.

Dr. Huma described SCM as an integral component of any successful intervention. "Health commodity availability ensures that products are available for achieving treatment, prevention and cure," she said. She conceded that human resource capacity in SCM has remained a neglected area in Pakistan, and thanked USAID and Deliver for offering collaboration in this important aspect of institutional capacity building.

Dr. Huma informed that HSA and Deliver are also working to integrate an SCM course in three credit course curriculum for students doing Masters degree in Public Health or Health Economics and Management at the HSA.

Dr. Tariq informed the gathering that contraceptive commodity consumption from 2010-2011 averted an estimated 3.2 million unintended pregnancies, more than 81,000 infant deaths, and 3,300 maternal deaths. He attributed the 14 per cent increase in contraceptive use to USAID support for family planning commodities. "We have also found that on the average, for both web-based LMIS and paper-based LMIS systems, the district level had an inventory turnover of greater than 1.0 and facility level had 0.56, indicating that inventory flows much more quickly through districts than facilities," he said.

USAID has also been providing health commodities for health programmes run by the federal and provincial governments since devolution in 2011.

This support comprises monitoring for more than 47,000 HIV and AIDS patients; more than 6 million HIV/hepatitis-screened blood transfusions; two years of treatment to 500 patients with multi-drug resistant TB; and laboratory equipment benefiting a population of more than 22 million to detect an additional 10 per cent of TB cases; as well as 13 million safe injections.

Dr. Tariq took pride in informing that all 143 districts and more than 85% of the public sector's SDPs are well-stocked with family planning products. "This is unprecedented since the early 1960s when we started the family planning programme in Pakistan," he mentioned.

Dr. Tariq was confident with financial support from the US government, and technical assistance from the government of Pakistan and NGO partners, "We will meet the needs of anticipated 28% growth rate over the next five years. Moreover, as part of USAID's continuing commodity support for the next two years till 2014, aiming aversion of another 4.7million unintended pregnancies; aversion of 4.2 million unintended births, saving lives of another 122,000 infants and 5,000 mothers does not look like a distant possibility."

Dr. Tariq said, "While we understand that SCM is integral to health systems strengthening, we must also remember that supply chain alone cannot achieve this all together and that is why an integrated response is essential to avert ailing maternal and child mortality in Pakistan."