

ENSURING SUPPLY CHAIN CONTINUITY OF ESSENTIAL HIV SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

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CHALLENGE

The pandemic brought an extra burden for people living HIV (PLHIV), especially those with co-morbidity conditions or advanced HIV disease who are at greater risk of COVID-19-related complications. To maintain the continuity of HIV services while minimizing the risk of exposure, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MOH) in collaboration with stakeholders including the USAID Global Health Supply Chain Program-Procurement and Supply Management (GHSC-PSM) project developed and issued interim guidance in March 2020 for the provision of HIV services in the context of COVID-19. The MOH directed all antiretroviral treatment (ART) sites to implement six months dispensing of antiretrovirals (ARVs) for stable clients and three months for others. In May 2020, the guidance was revised and emphasized the continued implementation of multi-month dispensing (MMD) of ARVs.

THE FOUR APPROACHES

GHSC-PSM supported the Ethiopian Pharmaceutical Supplies Agency (EPSA) through four main approaches.

1

Stock analysis and distribution of about 2.3 million packs of ARVs to pre-position sufficient stock in 1,370 ART sites for MMD.

2

Updating ARV supply plans on a quarterly basis to replenish ARV stock.

3

Conducting **monthly ARV stock status risk analysis** to determine the risk level and support mitigation interventions to avert potential shortages/stockouts.

4

Regularly conducting **supportive supervision and site-level support** (once a year at the MOH level and quarterly at the regional level) to ensure the implementation of the interim guidance in context of COVID-19.

RESULTS

By using these approaches, PLHIV's risk of exposure to COVID-19 is reduced while also saving them time and money on trips to service delivery points. As of December 2020, about **76% of eligible adults were on six months' worth of ARVs. Additionally, about 85% of eligible adults and 90% of pediatric patients are on ART**, demonstrating successful ART optimization. Joint planning and monitoring among key stakeholders accompanied with regular tracking and monitoring of ARV stocks and quarterly site-level support and joint supportive supervision led to keeping PLHIV healthy and safe from COVID-19.



A mother collecting several months' worth of ARVs at a health facility in Ethiopia. Photo credit: GHSC-PSM/Berhan Mebratu

MOVING FORWARD

GHSC-PSM will continue supporting the EPSA to ensure the implementation of MOH interim guidance in the context of COVID-19. This will include stock status risk analysis, continued joint supportive supervision with the MOH, strengthening coordination and communication among stakeholders and placing all eligible patients on MMD.