

OpenLMIS

Health need

Billions of dollars in lifesaving medical commodities are distributed annually to low-income countries. However, ensuring these commodities reach those most in need continues to be a challenge. Large populations are unable to access essential health care services intended for them because of inadequate distribution systems for vaccines, essential medicines, and supplies. The result is devastating to these communities; millions die annually from preventable diseases that could be addressed by improvements in supply chain performance.

A significant contributing factor to poorly performing health system supply chains is the absence of a systematic, comprehensive, and collaborative approach to logistics management information system (LMIS) design. To date, LMIS design has been fragmented and often focused on isolated efforts to address only a particular disease or supply chain layer (e.g., the national store).

Technology solution

OpenLMIS is a community-focused initiative to create a shared platform of tools and knowledge including an open source, electronic LMIS for health commodity supply chains. Several recent technology advances have emerged that can substantially improve the quality of LMIS for use in low-income countries, including improved Internet access, an expanding footprint of mobile networks and data services, cloud computing, and more powerful and lower-cost devices, such as smartphones and tablets. The global health community has a unique opportunity to improve the quality of data and information management to achieve a more integrated and aligned LMIS.

Recognizing this, PATH's Health Management Information Systems team used the Collaborative Requirements Development Methodology (a methodology developed by PATH and the Public Health Informatics Institute) to define system requirements for Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Zambia. We then lead the effort to design OpenLMIS to meet those requirements through a systematic and rational approach and provided technical and project management support to partners for development and deployment.

Current status and results

OpenLMIS is currently available free of charge and is being deployed in Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia. PATH continues to play a very important role in orchestrating the deployment as well as strengthening and catalyzing the community of collaborators and users. In Tanzania, 17 districts have been trained and have started to enter historical data for their respective districts. The rollout is currently ongoing, and 71 more districts will be trained by the end of March 2014. The OpenLMIS initiative is expanding in number of organizations contributing to the software, is nearing completion of a core system, and has increased its visibility within the global health community.



OpenLMIS.org

OpenLMIS improves supply chain logistics.

“The computerization of the medicines management system is hoped to address to a certain extent the challenges of stock-outs which has persistently been observed...It will also facilitate the work of district pharmacists by enabling faster collection, transmission, and aggregation of data. This will result in data being available more quickly for timely decision-making and actions to help ensure products are available where and when needed.”

Dr. Rufaro Chatora, World Health Organization, Tanzania

Availability

For more information regarding this project, contact Henry Mwanyika at hmwanyika@path.org, or visit <http://openlmis.org/>.

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