Life Saving Commodities – Demand, Access and Performance

Background

The UN Commission on Life-Saving Commodities for Women and Children (the Commission) was formed in 2012 by the UN Secretary-General as part of the global Every Woman Every Child (EWECE) movement (www.everywomaneverychild.org). The Commission challenged the global community to increase access to and appropriate use of essential medicines, medical devices, and health supplies that effectively address the leading preventable causes of death during pregnancy, childbirth, and childhood.

Led by a wide range of high-level leaders from around the world, the Commission made ten recommendations focused on rapidly increasing the availability and use of 13 priority commodities for reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health (RMNCH) to achieve the goal of saving the lives of six million women and children by 2017.

Eight expert groups – or Technical Resource Teams (TRTs) – carry forward the Commission’s recommendations by supporting countries in their efforts to make these essential commodities more widely available and used, and by addressing global and regional RMNCH challenges. Each of these TRTs specializes on a type of commodities or on a barrier that prevents a wider use of these commodities.

Pooling expertise on demand, access and performance

Demand and utilization for the 13 life-saving commodities is hampered by several factors at the local level: financial barriers and sociocultural issues influence demand and access to commodities by women and caregivers as well as providers; and health care workers have limited training and outdated skills (including a lack of job aids) for use of specific products and in some cases are faced with policies restricting them from prescribing and administering life-saving commodities.

The Demand, Access & Performance TRT focuses on removing these barriers to demand and utilization. It supports countries to develop plans that increase demand for and utilization of health services and products, particularly among underserved populations.

The TRT also develops tools to accelerate demand generation efforts and is working on improving existing tools and job aids and developing new ones where needed to ensure that health care providers are knowledgeable about the latest national guidelines.

Progress to date

Demand:

- Strengthen stakeholders’ capacity in selected countries to develop and implement effective demand generation strategies. The TRT has published an online Demand Generation Implementation Kit (I-Kit) http://sbccimplementationkits.org/demandrmnch which provides a step-by-step guide on how to create demand generation communication strategies for family planning, maternal and newborn health and child health commodities.

- Support cross-cutting capacity-building to support demand for life-saving commodities: The TRT has published several cross-cutting guides to support demand generation

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1 The other TRTs focus on family planning; maternal health; child health; newborn health; global markets, quality and regulation; supply chain and local markets; and advocacy. These groups are coordinated by a multi-agency Strategy and Coordination Team hosted by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).
programs, including a theory-based framework for media selection; case studies and recommendations in utilizing ICT in demand generation; a guide to address the role of gender http://sbccimplementationkits.org/demandrmnch/gender/ and a guide to public-private partnerships in increasing the demand for RMNCH commodities.

- Understand the evidence base for demand generation of life-saving commodities. The TRT conducted an evidence review to assess and synthesize the current evidence of social and behavioral drivers of demand generation for the 13 commodities as well as effective practices in implementing demand generation programs.
- Review of country-specific policies, programs and materials around demand generation for selected commodities: The TRT has developed a guidance tool on how to conduct a national assessment on demand generation for underutilized commodities. It has conducted such a demand assessment in Uganda and is about to conduct one in DRC.

Performance:
- Reviewed current national policies and practices related to the life-saving commodities jointly with six of the pathfinder countries' (Ethiopia, Malawi, Senegal, Tanzania, Nigeria and Uganda) and one non-pathfinder country (Kenya), and subsequently supported the development of national action plans to develop performance enhancing and monitoring mechanisms for health workers.
- Carried out detailed analysis of existing policies, guidelines and checklists for the use of the 13 life-saving commodities for six countries (Uganda, Malawi, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Senegal) and identified weaknesses in existing tools and gaps that require the development of new tools.

How to involve the Demand, Access & Performance TRT

The Demand, Access & Performance TRT is available to provide technical assistance to countries in several ways to support their introduction and use of the 13 essential commodities, including:
- Support for developing action plans and timelines
- Assistance to develop national plans
- Support for developing and implementing demand generation programs
- Support for landscaping analyses and national assessments
- Support for review of existing and development of new health worker tools including clinical guidelines, checklists and job aids
- Design and implementation of training programs to improve uptake and proper use of the life-saving commodities, including use of e-learning
- Operations research at the health facility and other levels to provide new insights into old and emerging barriers to use of the life-saving commodities
- Design of health worker performance monitoring within the wider M&E system
- Support to develop service delivery expansion plans and human resource plans

Resources

The Demand, Access & Performance TRT has:
- Developed reviews of job aids, guidelines and checklist for seven countries
- Published an online Demand Generation Implementation Kit with adaptable communication strategies for nine commodities http://sbccimplementationkits.org/demandrmnch
- Published a series of supporting tools and a report with summary briefs outlining the evidence of demand generation for all 13 commodities

Contact us

For more information or to request tools and technical assistance, please contact Sanjanthi Velu svelu1@jhu.edu, Zarnaz Fouladi zfouladi@usaid.gov, or John Nduba john.nduba@amref.org

Members

The Demand, Access & Performance TRT is chaired by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF), bringing together experts from the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3), based at John Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs (JHU/CCP), Population Services International (PSI), the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), FHI360, Drexel University, Speak Up Africa, Development Media International (DMI), MAMA, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

The ‘pathfinder countries’ are the eight countries where the TRTs started their work: Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, and Uganda.

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