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Updated May 2012

TECHNICAL
BRIEF.5

Community Strategy

Clinical Services

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Strengthening laboratory services: Overview

APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde is working with the Ministries of Public Health and Sanitation and Medical Services (MOH) to increase access and use of HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services in public and selected private health facilities.

A key aspect of the APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde program is strengthening laboratories because of the important role they play in HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care and support.

In strengthening and networking laboratory services, APHIAplus works within the Government of Kenya system and national guidelines. The program collaborates closely with other partners to strengthen and improve access to quality laboratory services.

Essential areas of laboratory strengthening

- Human resources
- Equipment procurement and maintenance
- Quality management/ external quality assurance
- Commodities and supplies
- Improving physical facilities
- Document and records management
- Referral services and networking
- Safety,

Technical Strategy

In the APHIAplus Nuru ya Bonde strategy, laboratory services are part of a comprehensive HIV prevention, care and support program. Laboratory services are closely linked to various interventions in the program including the following:

- HIV counselling and testing.
- Antiretroviral therapy (ART).
- Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT).
- Clinical care services including TB/HIV and voluntary medical male circumcision.

Laboratory strengthening is implemented jointly with the Government through strategies that combine human resource development, standardizing processes, upgrading and maintenance of equipment, improving physical facilities and strengthening referrals and other linkages to ensure reliable commodity chains and quality services.

The whole process is geared to implement ISO accreditation through WHO-AFRO Strengthening Laboratory Management towards Accreditation (SLMTA).

In the second year, the project is focusing on two broad priorities.

Priority 1: Intensive capacity building to improve management of laboratories and quality of services.

Priority 2: Improved commodity management through intensive mentorship at facility-level and to ensure no stock-outs on critical laboratory commodities.

These priorities will be achieved through carefully selected activities to address the essential areas of laboratory strengthening.

1. Human Resources

- Orientation, mentorship and coaching of laboratory staff in the efficient and effective use of laboratory diagnostic equipment.

- Orientation of laboratory staff on sample collection for viral load and CD4 tests.
- Addressing staff shortages support by supporting introduction of extra shifts to improve efficiency and reduce delays in results (Five facilities will be supported in a pilot intervention).
- Each mentorship team will have a Laboratory Technician to provide intensive on-site mentorship and personalized supportive supervision to facility-based laboratory staff.
- Facilitate the implementation of the approved logistics management system for HIV test kits and laboratory commodities system.

5. Improving physical facilities

- Identifying suitable, refurbishing or renovating rooms to enhance the laboratory environment in health centres and hospitals.

6. Document and records management

- Assisting Level 4 facilities to formulate, review, print and implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- Orientation on health information system tools.

2. Equipment procurement and maintenance

- Working with the national programs supported by USAID to provide essential standard equipment to labs for critical tests required for HIV prevention, care and treatment.
- Identifying and developing new hubs that are supported to implement the SLAMTA process for WHO accreditation and linkage with the national equipment procurement mechanisms.

3. Quality management/external quality assurance

- Strengthening internal quality control (IQC) external quality assurance (EQA) by facilitating the provision of quality assurance materials, and provision of training, mentoring and focused technical assistance to promote quality and confidence in laboratory services.

4. Commodities and supplies

- Strengthening inventory systems.
- Mentor staff at the facility level to effectively forecast, quantify order, procure, and store laboratory supplies in order to eliminate stock outs or overstocking of reagents.

7. Referral services and networking

- Strengthening referral network for dry blot spot (DBT) CD4 tests and other tests to ensure facilities at all levels have access to quality laboratory services. The project provides courier support to ensure samples are safely and quickly transported to central labs for tests and results promptly relayed back to facilities. *For instance*, the project established a partnership with the AMPATH laboratory, which will conduct viral load and resistance testing for the management of complicated cases of patients on antiretroviral therapy.
- Linking private providers to the regional and national laboratory networks for referral laboratory services for diagnosis and monitoring of HIV, TB and other related conditions.

8. Safety

- Ensuring safe workplaces for laboratory workers.
- Training lab workers and putting in place procedures for medical waste management.

Improving commodity management: Partnership with HCSM

APHIA^{plus} Nuru ya Bonde collaborates with the Health Commodities and Services Management (HCSM) project, which is also funded by USAID.

The purpose of this project is to improve pharmaceutical systems by working on: commodity management at facility level; and also working on the relevant policies related to health commodities. In addition, this project will address laboratory systems.

Specifically the project works with the Ministries of Health and provide technical assistance to central and peripheral levels of the health system to strengthen commodity management; supports interventions to improve systems to deliver quality pharmaceutical services in the health sector by strengthening governance and adherence to relevant policies; and, provides much needed support to laboratory governance, commodity security and service delivery.

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