

Case Study: Increasing transparency in medicines supply

Title: Uganda's move to increase transparency in medicines supply	Date: June 2010
Personnel involved: National Drug Authority, MeTA Uganda Council	Location: Uganda

Country context: (200 words)

The National Drug Authority was set up through an Act of Parliament, The National Drug Policy and Authority Act (Cap. 206) to ensure the availability, at all times, of essential, efficacious and cost-effective drugs to the entire population of Uganda, as a means of providing satisfactory health care and safeguarding the appropriate use of drugs.

The National Drug Authority is charged with the implementation of the national drug policy, and with; dealing with the development and regulation of pharmacies and drugs in the country, approving the national list of essential drugs and supervise the revisions of the list in a manner provided by the minister, estimate drug needs to ensure that needs are met as economically as possible, control importation, exportation and sale of pharmaceuticals, control the quality of drugs, promote and control local production of essential drugs, and promote rational use of drugs among others.

In 1996, the NDA embarked on a drug registration exercise. Before then, all drugs imported into the country had not been subjected to a drug registration process. This exercise has been a control measure to ensure that only drugs of proven quality, safety and efficacy are licensed to for importation into Uganda. To date, the NDA has registered approximately 4500 human drugs, and 450 veterinary drugs.

The National Drug Authority's Drug Information Department is responsible for: Clinical Trials, Pharmacovigilance, Drug Promotion, Veterinary issues, Awareness campaigns and information dissemination.

Problem identification: (250 words)

Information sharing regarding the quality, availability and access to medicines in Uganda occurs but on a very small scale. Information regarding the registration of the medicines was not easily available to clients and the general public thus creating an information gap amongst clients and end users. Access to information regarding registration of medicines could only be obtained at a fee thus creating a barrier to access of information. Further, the information was not regularly updated thus affecting the quality and timeliness of information available to the public.

Users of information relating to medicines registered for use in Uganda did not have ready access to the information (including on volumes and price) that would enable them make quick decisions. Difficulty in access to information relating to the registration status of medicines led to a difficulty in users and consumers ability to provide feedback on the quality and availability of medicines in Uganda.

Studies carried out in-country show that there are counterfeit and sub standard drugs on the market yet there was no easy way for users to quickly and easily verify the authenticity without going through a lengthy process.

MeTA's intervention (300 words max)

Multi stakeholder initiatives have been identified as one of the avenues through which major aspects of information relating to medicine quality, availability and access can be availed to all stakeholders. As a result, through use of the multi-stakeholder process provided by the MeTA national Council, analysis of the issues relating to availability of critical information to the public were discussed and key action points identified. The MeTA Uganda Council observed that making available information relating to the registration status, volumes and price of medicines in the country would be a positive way forward. This would be made possible by ensuring that the database of registered medicines was made available on the National Drug Authority (NDA) website.

MeTA Uganda acknowledged the importance of this activity and included it in its work plan activities with the main objective of supporting National Drug Authority to regularly update and post the database of registered medicines on its website. NDA was committed to this initiative and support by MeTA Uganda, and thus implemented this activity.

The database of registered drugs is now searchable online (www.nda.or.ug) as a result of one MeTA's work plan activities with the National Drug Authority. This is currently being advertised in the newspapers together with the SMS information service whereby clients can inquire about the registration status of a drug, pharmacy, drug shop or manufacturer. This has generated so much interest among members of the general public who are providing NDA with feedback on its operations especially with regard to medicines registration and quality. Further, an activity is being piloted on capturing volumes and landing price of selected medicines.

Outputs: (300 words max)

The specific output of MeTA Uganda's intervention was a new way of making information relating to the registration status of medicines readily and freely available to all stakeholders including the public through the National Drug Authority website (www.nda.or.ug). This information can now be easily and freely accessed by any client or potential user of the information from any location without having to physically walk to the NDA offices. The regular updating and posting of the information of the website is a critical output relating to data disclosure, a core principle of MeTA.

Impact and significance: (300 words max)

The major significance of MeTA's intervention in supporting National Drug Authority to regularly update and post the database of registered medicines on its website relates to the increased efficiency in disclosing of information to stakeholders.

By making this information freely and readily available, stakeholders can easily access information and make key decisions relating to availability, quality, price, access and efficacy of medicines in Uganda.

This intervention provides an important platform through which stakeholders including the public can provide important feedback regarding the availability, quality, price, and efficacy of medicines on the Ugandan market. The feedback received then enables NDA to make any corrective action or provide any clarification regarding medicine availability and quality. The net effect would be improved access to medicines.

What lessons can be drawn from this experience?(200 words max)

Lessons drawn from this experience include:

The importance of the multi stakeholder process in getting stakeholders to collectively identify issues of importance that need addressing with regard to medicine quality and accessibility.

The ability to critically analyze the best methods of implementing decisions while taking into consideration all stakeholder concerns. This in turn enables all stakeholders own up to the process.

Information disclosure provides stakeholders with key information that enables them make informed decisions that ultimately lead to improvement of mechanisms that impact on quality and access to medicines.

Information disclosure positively impacts on the perception that stakeholders have regarding transparency and accountability of organizations and their operations.

Links to useful publications/websites/contact details of key people involved etc.

www.nda.or.ug