

AMDS

The AIDS Medicines and Diagnostics Service (AMDS) Antiretroviral treatment procurement and supply chain management

WHAT IS AMDS?

The AIDS Medicines and Diagnostics Service (AMDS) is a technical network created by WHO with departments of UNAIDS cosponsor organizations and the UNAIDS secretariat that aims to maximize access to antiretroviral (ARV) drugs and HIV diagnostics.

WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank and the UNAIDS Secretariat are the core partners in this effort and some technical partners outside the UN system (such as Management Sciences for Health, John Snow Inc. and the International Dispensary Association) have also agreed in principle to participate. Discussions with UNDP and other potential technical partners outside the UN are ongoing.

Within the network, the technical work will be carried out mainly by the various technical departments and their partners, with a significant focus on action at country level. The network is supported by the AMDS secretariat, hosted by the HIV/AIDS Department of WHO. The secretariat will support partners working together and will provide a 'clearing house' (see further explanation later in the information sheet) on procurement and supply management for ARV drugs and HIV diagnostics.

MISSION

The AMDS network aims to improve access to HIV medicines and diagnostics so that all people living with AIDS who need antiretroviral therapy (ART) can access the necessary life-prolonging drugs.

OBJECTIVES

AMDS aims to maximize access to ARVs and HIV diagnostics within the framework of "3 by 5", by providing strategic information and technical assistance to ARV programmes, through the development of one-stop supply solutions, and through the development of strategies that will decrease the risks associated with launching treatment programmes.

KEY QUESTIONS

WHY EXACTLY WAS AMDS SET UP?

The AMDS was started because range of ARV drugs and HIV diagnostics available and on offer in many developing countries is not well organized. As a result, much ARV procurement and supply chain management has been carried out on an ad hoc basis (e.g. when there is a tender to procure drugs, or private demand) which makes access either non-existent, erratic (for organizations that have no sophisticated procurement and distribution systems like workplace and NGO programmes), or too expensive.

The AMDS was set up to help countries with all aspects of selecting, procuring and delivering both HIV medicines and diagnostic tools to the point of service delivery.

WHAT IS WHO'S ROLE IN THE AMDS?

The WHO HIV/AIDS Department hosts the AMDS secretariat, and participates in the network with three key departments: the Essential Drugs and Medicines Policy department, the departments of Essential Technology for Health, and the WHO supply department.

THE AMDS SECRETARIAT HAS PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR:

- Fostering partnership work between the collaborating departments and partner organizations.
- Dissemination of strategic information on ARVs and HIV diagnostics supply management, and support communication between members and stakeholders.
- Supporting the action of its partners when assisting with procurement and supply chain management planning, capacity building and monitoring at national level.
- Supporting the procurement of ARVs and diagnostics through partner organizations.
- Brokerage of technical assistance between countries and technical partners.



THE AMDS SECRETARIAT WILL SUPPORT A 'GLOBAL CLEARING HOUSE' FOR PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT - WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS?

The global clearing house will mean strategic information on the availability of supplies and the conditions under which they can be made available can be used to inform procurement and supply chain management decisions in treatment programmes. This information is at present often difficult to find, and cannot be found in one place.



The AMDS network aims to improve access to HIV medicines and diagnostics

THE CLEARING HOUSE WILL ASSIST IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS: -

- The Secretariat will bring together all the relevant information it and its partners have has on the issues and present this in such a way that it is easily usable by all partners and countries.
- Preparing for the future - to reach "3 by 5" it is necessary to ensure the financial viability and expansion of treatment programs for years to come. To support this ARVs and diagnostics need to become more affordable. The global clearing house will gather information on the pricing of drugs and diagnostics, of raw materials, labour costs, investments needs and infrastructure needs, and on the patent situation of the necessary supplies.

Using this information, that the global clearing house will hold, countries will be able to make their own informed and strategic decisions on procurement and supply chain management and will be in a better position for negotiating for supplies and with partners.

WHAT KINDS OF PRODUCTS WILL THE AMDS HELP SUPPLY?

The AMDS will help supply quality ARVs and core diagnostics for HIV. In addition to ARVs, this includes HIV serological tests and equipment and reagents to determine CD4 counts.

HOW WILL THE AMDS ENSURE THAT THE PRODUCTS PROVIDED ARE OF GOOD QUALITY AND EFFICACY?

The AMDS relies on the already existing WHO prequalification scheme for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria medicines, and on the prequalification of HIV diagnostics for the WHO bulk procurement mechanism. These assess products and manufacturers according to stringent WHO standards of safety, quality and efficacy. WHO is working on guidance for treatment programmes on the selection of procurement agencies and quality-control laboratories.

IN WHICH COUNTRIES WILL AMDS WORK?

The AMDS Secretariat will seek to support "3 by 5" focus countries. Individual partners will initiate and continue to provide support in all countries in which they currently work. Beyond the focus countries, AMDS will provide ad hoc support to countries on request and on a case by case basis.

WILL AMDS PURSUE LARGE-SCALE GRANT FUNDING IN ORDER TO PURCHASE MEDICINES?

The AMDS is not a funding agency. The AMDS will, however, aim to reach agreement with funding agencies and recipients on common principles and operations and will help create more flexible funding mechanisms for programmes that might find themselves in 'stock out' (where they do not have enough medical or diagnostic stock) situations.

WILL AMDS BUY MEDICINES AND DIAGNOSTICS FOR THE COUNTRIES THAT NEED THEM MOST?

AMDS does not envisage buying medicines directly. That is a function for countries and for procuring organizations. Within the AMDS network, UNICEF, WHO supply division and the IDA (International Dispensary Association) currently provide supply services, but other partners might be able to do so in the future or join the network.

WHAT WILL AMDS DO TO HELP COUNTRIES FACING THE PROSPECT OF RUNNING OUT OF THEIR ARV STOCK?

Running out of stock is highly problematic for ARV programs as patients on ART need a constant supply of medicines. Lack of stock means they will not be able to continue their treatment in the correct manner. Stock outs also means that a programme cannot start new patients on ART treatment.

THE AMDS PARTNERS WILL SEEK SOLUTIONS TO 'STOCK OUT' PROBLEMS ON TWO LEVELS:

- The creation of ARV stock piles - UNICEF is currently working on the creation of a stockpile for ARVs from which drugs can be supplied immediately to countries facing stock out. This will avoid delays in re-supplying the medicines needed, which can be of up to six months if no stock is available for immediate supply. The stock pile will also be used to help small organisations without procurement capacity to start their programmes immediately - for example small non-governmental and faith-based organisations.
- Developing flexible finance mechanisms - AMDS will support the development of flexible finance mechanisms to ensure that programmes that face stock out situations can mobilize and disburse funds quickly.