Partnership with private pharmacies to improve health system performance and client experience for pick-up of antiretrovirals in Uganda

Paul Bitarabeho, Kevin Gibbons, and Le Beau Taljaard | Africa Resource Centre

**Context**

- In Uganda, HIV/AIDS clients need access to ARVs. Missing one taking time for accessing ARVs services was a barrier to success. Now, there are more than 300 clients per clinic experiencing short, but clear improvements.
- Differentiated service delivery (DSD) and public-private partnerships have the potential to improve client experience and health system efficiency. To improve options, services and opportunities, the Ugandan National AIDS Control Program (NACP) and partners of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Office of the United States Global AIDS Coordinator (USGAC) introduced a model of differentiated service delivery (DSD) for antiretrovirals (ARVs) in Uganda.

**Activity Description**

**Activity Impact**

In the mentioned plan, the OPSDDP model has enrolled over 900 clients from 75 health facilities and 20 private pharmacies across Uganda. The target for 2023 is to reach over 100 health facilities, 200 pharmacies, and 100,000 clients to position the plan for rapid enrollment and expansion.

Here are some of the key impacts of OPSDDP implementation thus far:

- About 60,000 clients from 75 health facilities and 20 private pharmacies across Uganda.
- Clients have high levels of retention and viral load suppression.
- No new infections or deaths have been observed.
- Stock movements are approved by the in-charge of the health facilities and fulfilled.
- Commodity Flow

**Facilitators**

- Investment of key stakeholders
- Implementation of DSD model
- Evidence of impacts
- Reporting and feedback

**Challenges**

- Issues with two software systems syncing.
- Differing levels of commitment by IP staff and health care workers.
- Lack of clarity on how to get approval from local government officials in each of 50+ districts that needed to sign an MOU for work to begin. These delays required regular visits to district governors and health facilities to clarify timelines and speed up enrollment.
- Issues with two software systems syncing.
- Slow enrollment of clients.
- Difficulties in convincing clients to use the pharmacies.
- Personalization of the program.

**Lessons Learned**

- Focus on incorporating client preferences and improving client experience. The client can add a focus on how the client is being served.
- Investing in client feedback is critical.
- Communication and training are essential.
- Involvement of key stakeholders.
- Scaling up existing pilot and systems.
- Gathering evidence from operations.
- Network building and partnerships.
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**Evidence**

There has been steady progress in client enrollment. Partners are currently pushing to bring in more health facilities and pharmacies to spread the enrollment. Making rounds. About 40,000 clients were reached in 2021. The model includes assessment of needs, MOU signing with districts, oversight of digital systems, and training, and was designed to be adapted to low-resource settings and rapid scale-up.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Month</th>
<th>Health Facility</th>
<th>Pharmacy</th>
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<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
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<td>386</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
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**Results of CRPDDP Client Satisfaction Survey**

- About 40,000 clients from 70 high-traffic health facilities and 107 private pharmacies across Uganda.
- Clients have high levels of retention and viral load suppression.
- No new infections or deaths have been observed.
- Stock movements are approved by the in-charge of the health facilities and fulfilled.
- Commodity Flow

**Questions:**

1. What are the potential mechanisms for improving health systems in Uganda through partnerships with private pharmacies?
2. What are some of the key impacts of the OPSDDP implementation thus far?
3. What are some of the challenges faced during the implementation of the OPSDDP model in Uganda?
4. What are some of the lessons learned from the implementation of the OPSDDP model in Uganda?

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