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SUDAN

SUCCESS STORY

Bringing Medicine to Southern Sudan

Streamlining logistics systems to ensure supplies are on hand



Photo: JSI Jen Antilla

A health worker provides medicine to the mother of a sick child.

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Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

When people are ill in southern Sudan, they are lucky if they have a health facility where they can go to for care. The civil war between north and south Sudan that marked much of Sudan's 52 years of independence severely stunted the growth of southern Sudan's health system, and as a result, as much as 75% of the population is estimated to have no access to healthcare. When a health facility is accessible, patients often do not receive quality services and drugs needed for treatment frequently are not available. As a result, many patients go without treatment, which sometimes leads to serious consequences.

Few health personnel have the comprehensive knowledge of logistics to ensure that health facilities do not run out of needed drugs. To address this gap, a USAID-funded workshop called, “Improving Logistics Capacity,” was held in Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan. The 20 workshop participants represented the Government of southern Sudan's Ministry of Health, state-level ministries of health, county health departments, and partner organizations, and all were experienced with the lack of supplies for health facilities.

During the workshop, participants mastered basic health commodity logistics concepts, including the purpose of a logistics system, what information must be collected in order to make good logistics decisions, how to assess stock levels, and when to take action to prevent overstocks or shortages. One participant commented that the “workshop has acted to me as an eye opener. It has prepared me to handle the logistics department with confidence. From today, I am going to be a decision-maker.”

Participants wasted no time in directly applying their new knowledge to their current situation, coming up with concrete and realistic strategies for logistics system improvement. They developed plans to collect and move essential logistics data from health facilities to decision-makers in Juba; identified when to place orders; and identified what to do when facilities have more of a particular item, e.g., anti-malarial medication, than they can use before it expires. Strategies developed by participants are beginning to be used in parts of southern Sudan. Participants' efforts, ideas, and experiences can then inform the government's efforts to build its own national logistics system in the future.