

SAFE, AFFORDABLE, AND EFFECTIVE MEDICINES FOR UKRAINIANS (SAFEMed) ACTIVITY

MONTHLY NEWS DIGEST



OVERVIEW

Our work in Ukraine aims to bolster pharmaceutical governance and financing, contribute to a longer-term plan for pharmaceutical financing, and strengthen rational pharmaceutical management and the pharmaceutical supply chain, ultimately leading to better availability and use of essential medicines, particularly for those living with TB, HIV and AIDS, and noncommunicable diseases. We support the Government of Ukraine in responding to COVID-19 through technical assistance in implementing its national vaccination plan.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, MPU NOW RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL CENTRALIZED PROCUREMENT OF ALL STATE-FUNDED MEDICAL COMMODITIES

In 2015, in a move to address corruption concerns within health procurement, Verkhovna Rada passed the Law on International Procurement, which eliminated the Ministry of Health (MOH) tender committee and enabled three international agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, and Crown Agents) to procure medicines and medical supplies for Ukraine. Forty central procurement programs, including seven programs that cover PEPFAR commodities for the diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS, TB, and hepatitis as well as methadone replacement therapy, were handled by international organizations. This approach was considered as a temporary transitional stage until a fully functioning single procurement body created by MOH was created. In 2018, the government established the State Enterprise "Medical Procurement of Ukraine" (MPU) to take over the function of central procurement in the most transparent, timely, and cost-effective manner.

Gradually, MOH began to order more and more of the medical commodities for central procurement through MPU. In 2022, MPU was responsible for 63% of all public procurement at a centralized level, and despite the war, MPU's purchases were at 40-50% lower prices compared to the international organizations, hospitals, and pharmacies, demonstrating efficiency and significant savings. Since 2020, MPU has managed to save more than UAH 5,5 billion of budget funds that could be directly to procuring more and different medicines needed to serve Ukrainian patients. These savings have primarily been achieved through use of strategic category management practices, open tendering, and smart direct negotiations – all while ensuring medicines procured meet strict quality standards.

Starting from 2023 international organizations will no longer purchase medicines for Ukraine through state budget, and all central procurement directions will be transferred to MPU. Deliveries of medicines purchased earlier (vaccines, medical products for transplantation, treatment of epidermolysis bullosa, etc.) will continue throughout 2023. At the same time, due to the needs brought about by the war this year, priority commodities such as HIV and TB will be donated as humanitarian aid through international partners such as USAID, Global Fund, and others. Further, some medical commodities previously procured centrally, such as pre- and post-transplant items and consumables for blood glucose testing, are going to be included as part of the expansion of the State Reimbursement Program, also known as the Affordable Medicines Program.






Since the establishment of MPU in 2018 USAID's SAFEMed Activity has been supporting the development and continual growth of the institution through technical and legal assistance.

SAFEMED CONTINUES TO SUPPORT MEDICINES VERIFICATION SYSTEM ESTABLISHMENT IN UKRAINE

On January 26 the MOH convened a high level online dialogue to reach agreement on outstanding issues related to implementation of the verification system development roadmap in Ukraine. Previously, the MOH sent a set of questions to the European Medical Verification Organization (EMVO) about the EU verification system, and early in January EMVO sent their responses.

The meeting, supported by SAFEMed, was attended by senior representatives from the MOH, Verkhovna Rada Committee on Public Health, Medical Assistance and Medical Insurance, the State Expert Center, State Service of Ukraine on Medicines and Drugs Control, and Legal Alliance.

Deputy Minister Mariia Karchevych opened the meeting and SAFEMed partner Legal Alliance presented an overview about few critical points for verification system implementation with the options to be addressed by the Minister of Health and Chair of the VR Healthcare Committee. During the meeting the following was agreed:

-  To update the definition of National Medicine Verification Organization, through Cabinet of Ministry decree, to include clarification about the owner of the verification organization and system to address the lack of clarity of alignment between Ukraine and EU legislation.
-  To start negotiations with the European hub for verification with clear information that the verification system data storage will be located on the territory of Ukraine.
-  To stop the common pharmacy practice of opening medicines primary packaging to sell smaller quantities but allowing for a transitional period after the war.
-  To align with the EU requirement of ensuring that the competent regulatory authority has access to the verification system to be able to serve their market control function through standardized reports submitted to the competent authority with an agreed upon frequency.
-  To remove the registration certificate number from unique medicine identifier requirements to avoid complexity of the process of medicines verification.

SAFEMED CONDUCTED SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM MEETING IN KRAKOW, POLAND



Photo credit: SAFEMed

For the first time since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, senior members of the SAFEMed management team had the opportunity to hold an in-person two-day working session in Krakow, Poland January 24-25. During the meeting, the team reviewed project achievements and challenges, particularly considering the experience over the last 11 months of the war, and identified actions needed to continually strengthen program excellence and operational readiness. In addition, the team placed special emphasis on examining progress on the project’s performance monitoring plan and key indicators. This work involved taking a deeper dive into a select number of the indicators to reflect on the factors influencing achievement of the targets, especially in the context of the war, and opportunities for the project to refine strategies and activities to continually achieve results. This effort aligns with MSH’s commitment and strategic priority towards evidence based and data-driven decisions to guide implementation and drive impact. The gathering was linked to meetings organized the same week by the USAID/Ukraine Office of Health that involved representatives of USAID implementing partners.

“MEETING THE CHALLENGE: GETTING MEDICAL CARE TO PEOPLE IN NEED” A STORY OF BRAVERY AND RESILIENCE FROM A SAFEMED TEAM MEMBER

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