

Sudan

CASE STUDY TITLE: A semi-autonomous Supply Chain agency with strong leadership.

ABSTRACT

The National Medical Supplies Fund (NMSF) is the national hub for procurement and distribution of medicines in Sudan. In line with the objective of the Global Fund (GF), the mandate of NMSF is to ensure that essential medicines and medical supplies of proven safety, efficacy and quality are available to the population at reasonable prices.

This article describes how NMSF, as a semi-autonomous pharmaceuticals supply agency, has been successful in partnering with UNICEF and the People that Deliver (PtD) Initiative in developing a comprehensive strategy for the development and retention of its workforce. Success is attributed to strong leadership with a focus on continual improvement of all aspects of the organization.

BACKGROUND

The National Medical Supplies Fund (NMSF) is the successor of the Central Medical Supplies Public Corporation (CMS) which was established in 1991 as a semi-autonomous organization tasked with the selection, procurement, storage and distribution of medical supplies for the public sector in Sudan (NMSF, 2015). While the main focus of NMSF is to supply the public sector, it also serves the private pharmaceuticals sector in Sudan.



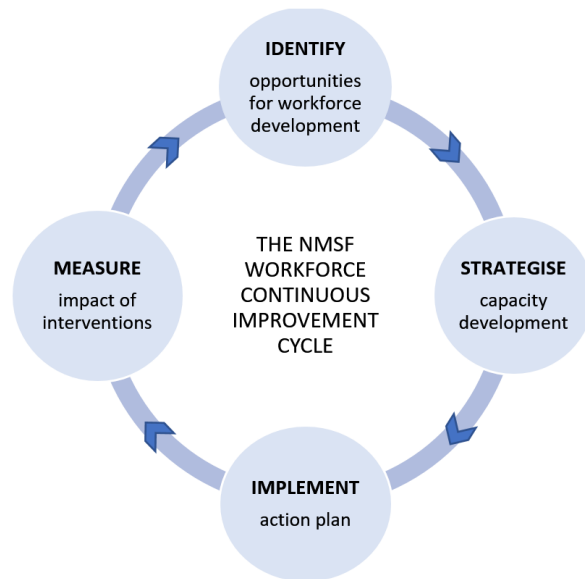
NMSF joined the People that Deliver (PtD) Initiative in 2013. The PtD Initiative was established in 2011 as a global partnership of organizations focusing on professionalization of supply chain personnel by advocating for a systematic approach to HR for Supply Chain Management.

NMSF's status as a parastatal organization has allowed it, to a large extent, to develop its own workforce policies, allowing it to be more flexible in their approach to staff management and development. This degree of independence combined with strong leadership with emphasis on capacity development has resulted in a high performance supply chain organization.

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

Continuous Improvement

A key philosophy behind the development of the capacity building strategy is the principle of Continuous (or Continual) Improvement (CI). The practice originates from the Japanese 'Kaizen' concept in manufacturing and business. Kaizen simply means 'change for the better'. Studies of companies and organizations worldwide have consistently found a strong correlation between structured capacity development, employee engagement, client satisfaction and business results. What keeps most employees engaged is a fundamental purpose and meaning to their work. The anticipated result of applying the principles of CI is a motivated, high-performance workforce committed to building an efficient, profitable and competitive company. CI is linked to the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM), which is a system of management based on the principle that every staff member must be committed to maintaining high standards of work in every aspect of a company's operations.



New Training Centre



In order to continuously strengthen its workforce, the NMSF leadership embarked on a bold project of constructing a grand purpose-built Supply Chain Training Centre on its premises in Khartoum. The *Abdulhameed Ibrahim Training Centre* has the capacity to accommodate training interventions not only for NMSF's own staff but also for external public and private organizations. It is envisaged that the NMSF Training Centre will grow to become a regional Centre of Excellence. The official opening of the centre is scheduled for April 17, 2017.

As well as providing postgraduate training and continual education for professionals, the centre supports a range of self-education and online learning activities. The training facility is unique in Africa, in that it caters specifically for the development of the supply chain community in Sudan, as well as for countries in the region and beyond.

Specifications of the physical infrastructure of the new training centre are impressive:

- Facilities for formal training, group work, self-study
- Four training rooms, 30 seats with desks
- Common hall with smart screens and projectors
- Conference hall with 265 fixed seats
- Computer laboratory with 25 computers
- Video conferencing facilities
- Electronic library with access to journals
- Physical library with study space
- WiFi and on-location IT support



PROGRESS & RESULTS

In order to support the functioning of the new state-of-the-art Training Centre, NMSF established a collaboration with UNICEF Supply Division and the People that Deliver (PtD) Initiative to:

- a) Establish a five-year training strategy
- b) Develop a comprehensive costed training plan based on an assessment of training needs
- c) Improve onboarding of new staff by way of a mentoring and coaching programme
- d) Link training interventions to individual job descriptions and performance

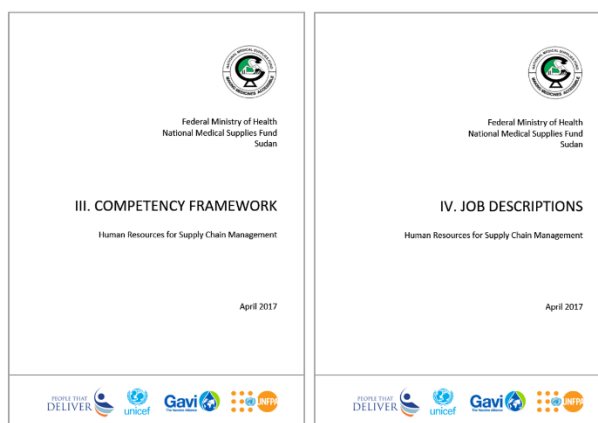
The methodology adopted for developing these deliverables is based on the PtD Four-Stepped Approach to HR capacity development in health supply chain systems (PtD, 2015).



The UNICEF/PtD/NMSF collaboration produced several outputs. The training strategy sets out the programme for a five year period, based on guiding principles that include the principles of continual improvement and competency-based learning. The costed annual training plan is an implementation of the training strategy and contains a detailed calendar of training activities with indication of the preferred training methodology for each training intervention. Training interventions are costed according to

the appropriate training methodology.

The competency framework is based on the PtD competency framework for leaders and managers. The PtD framework was tailored to the specific needs of the agency by adding competency areas for the corporate domains, including finance, HR and IT. Updated job descriptions are the result of surveys and interviews with key individuals, with a focus on unique staff functions within the organization both at HQ and sub-national level.



To monitor progress in terms of training implementation and its impact on the organization, a range of performance indicators were developed, typically measured over a 12-month period. Process indicators describe the processes that contribute to the achievement of outcomes. While process indicators do not guarantee the achievement of outcomes, they do monitor training interventions that are expected to lead to desirable outcomes in terms of improved business performance, profit and staff morale. Baseline indicators for the 2016 calendar year are indicated in square brackets.

- 1) **Training days per employee.** Total number of training days of all employees combined, divided by the total number of employees, gives average number of training days per employee [1.1].
- 2) **Internal training ratio.** The total number of internal training courses relative to the total number of training courses, internal plus external [58%].
- 3) **Training course implementation rate.** Number of training events implemented divided by total number of training courses planned [95%].
- 4) **Trainees committed.** Total number of trainees trained, divided by total number of trainees planned to be trained [96%].
- 5) **Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activity.** Number of active accounts, divided by total number of accounts [94%].
- 6) **Training budget of total NMSF budget.** Percentage of total NMSF budget allocated to training [6%].

In addition, in order to arrive at a measure of the effect that training has on the performance of the organization, two outcome or impact indicators were adopted.

- 7) **Training Satisfaction of State-level Managers.** Measures the level of satisfaction of managers at State level, of training given to them and their subordinates. Heads of NMSF State branches were asked whether they were satisfied with the quantity and quality training available. An online anonymous survey was used.
- 8) **Satisfaction of Customers with Products and Services.** Gauges the level of satisfaction of NMSF customers, i.e. receivers of goods and services. Again an online customer survey was used with key questions relating to service delivery, customer experience and overall satisfaction.

While cognisant of the fact that training in itself merely contributes to the overall performance of the organization, NMSF uses these indicators to determine baseline performance and to set targets for the period 2017-2021.

LESSONS LEARNED

This Sudan case study highlights the importance of vision and leadership within the pharmaceutical supply chain function at country level. A strong leadership function has resulted in a committed and motivated workforce operating within a conducive work environment. Equally important is the awareness among senior managers of the need for continual improvement within all sections of the organization. A prime example of this is the new training facility, which will ensure that continuous capacity development of the workforce remains a priority.

NEXT STEPS

There is further scope for improvement. Performance monitoring and worker appraisal are essential parts of optimizing productivity and quality of work of the supply chain workforce. There is a need to periodically review the organizational design of the agency, as well as the procedures for staff supervision and performance evaluation. Employees need to know what is expected of them. They need the right skills, training, tools, direction and authority to do their work and they require clear feedback on their performance.

There is scope for improvement also in terms of a tighter integration between worker's job descriptions, performance monitoring and training needs. The purpose of addressing these issues is to arrive at an organization that has an organized flow of leadership and authority in which every individual has a clear idea of what they do, whom they supervise, and whom they ultimately report to.

RELATED LINKS

Additional information may be obtained from the PtD website (www.peoplethatdeliver.org), as well as from the NMSF Sudan website (www.nmsf.gov.sd).

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