

## Summary Note: GFF Webinar Supply Chain Procurement for Health during the COVID-19 Outbreak 15 & 16 April 2020

### Introduction

These webinars focused on key supply chain challenges and discussed the roles played by the World Bank, the Global Financing Facility (GFF) and other partners in addressing them during the COVID-19 outbreak. It also covered risks associated with manufacturing essential RMNCAH supplies. These webinars comprised a technical presentation by Prashant Yadav (Advisor, Health Supply Chain, GFF Secretariat and World Bank), an intervention from Monique Vledder (Practice Manager, GFF Secretariat), an intervention from Tseganeh Amsalu (World Bank, Ethiopia) and Dr. Yeko (Director General of Operations, Federal Ministry of Health, Ethiopia), and a discussion facilitated by Petra Vergeer (GFF Lead, Knowledge and Learning and RBF, GFF Secretariat). The webinar was attended by key stakeholders involved and/or interested in supply chain-related matters in GFF supported countries.

### 1. COVID-19 and the Global Supply Chains for Medical Supplies, Prashant Yadav a. Key supply chain challenges during the COVID-19 outbreak

The supply chain for key medical supplies has been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak.

- The demand for **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** has increased twenty-fold, and some market intermediaries and suppliers are raising PPE prices. While efforts are being made to increase production, rapidly producing medical grade PPE remains a challenge.
- The demand for **critical medical equipment**, especially ventilators and oxygen therapy equipment, is experiencing a short-term surge due to the acute needs of European countries and the United States, as well as the preparedness efforts deployed by other countries. While some manufacturers from other industries (e.g. computers, textile) are repurposing their production lines to produce medical equipment, the extent to which they can deliver equipment in a timely fashion with the required quality and efficacy remains uncertain.
- In terms of laboratory and testing supplies, the procurement of **polymerase chain reaction tests** will depend on the testing strategy adopted by a country (demand), as well as by the availability of different types of tests (supply).
- Globally, compared to the same period in 2019, **international air cargo transportation** has declined by 35%, with lanes typically relying on belly capacity (i.e. Europe to Africa and Europe to Latin America) experiencing the most significant reductions. Caused by the cancellation of many passenger flights, this reduction in overall belly cargo capacity is being offset by some airlines by adding cargo-only “passenger” flights.

As demand grows exponentially, securing affordable medical supplies in a timely fashion will become more challenging. Global procurement and distribution facilitators may however help source the three categories of product mentioned above. Global facilitators also have a bird’s eye view of international cargo transportation and can help negotiate fixed volume transport – for instance, by working directly with suppliers to arrange outbound cargo from the country of origin. Importantly, while direct procurement remains an option for countries, it is important to recognize that getting better terms in this competitive market will be difficult, especially for PPE.

### b. Key global supply chain actors for COVID-19

- The **World Bank** supports countries benefiting from its COVID-19 financing mechanism to help secure medical supplies, by leveraging existing relationships and its capacity to connect quickly with suppliers. In some instances, this support can also be financial (e.g. upfronting payments for suppliers). For these countries, direct procurement remains an option. The recommendation is nevertheless to ask the

World Bank procurement team to either facilitate access to technical expertise or to broker relationships with suppliers, given the scarcity prevailing in the supply market.

- The **World Health Organization** is establishing an information coordination mechanism to track who buys what, in what quantities, and from where to help better gauge supply and demand.
- Various **agencies** with procurement platforms – such as UNICEF’s Supply Division, UNOPS and the Global Fund – are providing procurement facilitation services for COVID-19 supplies at the global level.
- The **World Food Program** is creating consolidated supply hubs in various regions (e.g. China, Europe, Africa, North America) where supplies are delivered and from which they are freighted to other countries. Such global systems can become the best option to address potential logistics and freight forwarding bottlenecks during the COVID-19 outbreak.

### c. Critical In-Country Supply Chain Actions

To help mitigate key bottlenecks, recommended supply chain actions to be taken in-country over the next few weeks include:

- Planning and determining infection control and prevention **protocols** (e.g. PPE, triage, case management, laboratories, etc.). The [WHO COVID-19 Essential Supplies Forecasting Tool](#) (ESFT) is designed to help governments, partners, and other stakeholders forecast potential requirements for essential supplies to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Developing **contingency scenarios** – for instance, what PPE conservation efforts should be made if the supply-side market cannot provide PPE in the next 45 days?
- Ensuring **continued communication** with the selected global procurement facilitator to understand what the supply side pipeline looks like and inform planning.
- Carefully conducting a **bottom-up assessment** to enhance overall system capacity and secure supplies needed in the specific infrastructural contexts of health facilities present in the country (e.g. a lot of focus on ventilators, but oxygen therapy machines might be better suited in some settings). There is a strong recommendation to engage and collaborate with international and national experts (e.g. critical care specialists in referral hospitals) to get their input and get a comprehensive picture.
- Agreeing on roles and responsibilities for **in-country logistics and distribution** to ensure responsiveness;
- Ensuring the **data tracking system** can capture stocks and how data is flowing to help allocate supplies in a fair, equitable and meaningful manner. It will also enhance a country’s capacity to monitor and evaluate after the supplies have been shipped.

## 2. Global Financing Facility: Partner Coordination in context of COVID-19 Outbreak, Monique Vledder

- The GFF Secretariat is currently exploring ways to collectively take advantage of existing structures and available support to prepare and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, while keeping an eye on the continuity of essential RMNCAH services.
- Coordination, including the use of global procurement facilitators, remains a key aspect of the COVID-19 response. In this regard, the GFF Secretariat is currently working with the Global Fund to develop a coordinated mechanism to engage with countries.
- Several GFF Investment Cases prioritize supply chains as one of the key areas of investment, and the GFF Secretariat will continue to work with countries in this direction.
- The availability of PPE at the front lines and the system’s ability to continue to deliver essential services for women and children are critical. In the current situation, there is a real risk that health workers might start fearing for their own health and that if their families, potentially causing them to leave their posts. A poll survey conducted by the GFF Secretariat already indicates an impact in half of the countries supported by the GFF, with interruptions in the provision of essential maternal and child

services. This highlights the need for countries to forecast at the frontlines (i.e. conduct bottom-up assessments).

- The GFF Secretariat is working with the private sector arm of the World Bank to identify various Africa-based private sector companies in which it can invest to produce PPE for the African market.
- Importantly, forecasting and coordination for RMNCAH commodities, including family planning commodities, will be critical for the next 12 months to reduce the risk of shortages and service interruptions.
- The GFF Secretariat encourages ministries of health to take advantage of the presence of GFF Liaison Officers in-country as well as to leverage World Bank Task Team leaders to help coordinate forecasting efforts.

### 3. Country Sharing: Preparedness in Ethiopia, Tseganeh Amsalu and Dr. Yeko

- The Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) of Ethiopia has prepared guidelines to help respond to the COVID-19 outbreak while ensuring the delivery of prioritized essential health services. Focused on providing advice and guidance at the subnational level, these guidelines address both supply-side and demand-side aspects to both ensure the readiness of health facilities and sensitize clients for continued service utilization. The guidelines also indicate that health facilities providing COVID-19 care should be different from those providing essential routine health services.
- Resources are planned to follow the same path. Resource mapping and service availability tracking are underway to ensure that each type of health facility can respond according to its designated focus.
- The FMOH also envisages using existing structures and mechanisms to distribute COVID-19 commodities and PPEs. An emergency line is however being established to ensure responsiveness. While COVID-19 procurement is being addressed, the FMOH is also endeavoring to strike a balance to ensure that resources are not diverted from essential medical equipment and supplies.
- The Ethiopian COVID-19 response is multisectoral in nature and includes the identification of local manufacturers susceptible of producing (minimum) quality PPE. Currently, capacity assessments are being conducted and a fast track mechanism has been established within the Food and Drug Administration to facilitate the certification of selected manufacturers.
- While efforts are being made by government agencies and partners to secure PPE and other critical medical equipment, the monitoring system is not well aligned and does not provide a clear picture of what is stored, what is distributed and where. To address this and help better identify potential gaps, a dashboard was created to ensure multilevel (national and regional) data collection and planning. This will enable information to flow within the government and with partners.

### 4. Discussion: Questions & Answers

#### How to ensure the continuity of essential services, including maternal and child health services?

The GFF Secretariat is working with various GFF countries to help separate health facilities providing COVID-19 services and those providing other health services to maintain client trust and service utilization. It is also helping rethink service delivery modalities to reduce client exposure – e.g. can contraceptives be provided without patients having to sit in a waiting room?

#### Is there a global platform that coordinates country demand for RMNCAH supplies?

In the context of maternal and child health, countries generally procure supplies directly. A variety of agencies with procurement platforms such as UNFPA and the Global Fund may be able to provide technical assistance. Before procuring RMNCAH commodities, it is important to determine what provides the best value, either collective procurement or a centralized information system. The latter has the potential of

better informing distribution, as in Senegal where it helped adapt distribution at subnational level and build confidence in the system.

#### Have any countries used WHO forecasting tools?

Tools only represent one way of organizing information and assess demand. The most critical input required is conducting a bottom up assessment to determine what equipment is available in health facilities; what types of protocols are needed; how triage will be conducted; and what human resource are needs; etc.

#### What about vaccine procurement? How can sourcing and transportation be combined to secure vaccines?

Vaccines benefit from a larger number of international partners trying to resolve procurement and distribution related issues. Comparatively, there is a blind spot when it comes to the procurement of RMNCAH supplies. The World Food Program's arrangement for COVID-19 (described above) could be used to expedite the transportation of vaccines and other essential medical supplies, in the event there is spare capacity.

#### How are global procurement facilitators coordinating their efforts?

An alignment workshop was organized this week with the GFF, Gavi, the Global Fund, the World Health Organization and the World Bank to look at each organization's comparative advantage and coordinate work on these technical areas, in support of ministries of health.

#### What is the role of the GFF Liaison Officer and Government Focal Point?

The GFF in-country coordination mechanism – namely the country platform which engages key in-country stakeholders including the private sector and civil society – helps countries take a collective look at prevailing challenges. Many GFF investment cases highlight supply chain challenges for commodities and, depending on country context, one or multiple partners can provide technical assistance and financing. Beside World Bank financed COVID-19 responses, every GFF country has a maternal and child health project for which the GFF also provides grant funding. Commodities can feature as a key area.

Over time, it is important for some of these essential commodities to be integrate in domestic budgets so that governments can increasingly provide domestic resources to help secure core commodities and deliver a comprehensive package of MCH services.

#### How to track COVID-19 supplies whilst ensuring data quality?

There are areas where COVID-19 supplies will require tracking without standardized request and acquisition forms. Because of the rapid response required and the supply change, tracking might be better served by using digital tools (e.g. telephones). Ensuring data quality will nevertheless remain challenging. It will be important to preselect a set of common indicators from existing matrices.

#### Is any support available to verify that a manufacturer is producing PPE according to prevailing quality standards?

There are two broad categories of PPE needed: (i) equipment that neither requires medical grade clean rooms at the finished state of production nor fabric with very low permeability parameters; and (ii) other PPE that require both specialized fabric and a very specialized manufacturing step which needs to be carried out in a clean room. The former is very feasible by manufacturers from other industries, but the latter will require significant capital and technical know-how before production volumes can be substantially increased.

The GFF Secretariat and the International Financial Corporation are currently assessing the production capacity as well as the scaling-up needs of some East African companies, while evaluating the financial viability of PPE production in a post-COVID-19 context.