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STRENGTHENING UGANDA'S SYSTEMS  
FOR TREATING AIDS NATIONALLY

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# Streamlining Equipment and Supplies Procurement among Laboratory Stakeholders in Uganda: A Critical Step toward Reducing Waste and Improving Laboratory Services Delivery

Since the introduction of anti-retroviral therapy (ART) in Uganda about a decade ago, developing the capacity of public health laboratories to meaningfully support ART has become a necessity. Multiple implementing partners involved in HIV service delivery programs have responded to this need through a number of interventions, including procurement and distribution of automated laboratory equipment. A side effect of these efforts, however, is that the national procurement system is overburdened with the costs incurred (after implementing partner project cease) of maintaining the wide variety of equipment that has been placed in various laboratories and providing the reagents (laboratory supplies, chemicals, and consumables) necessary to use the equipment. In 2005 the Uganda Ministry of Health (MOH), through the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL), conducted an assessment of automated laboratory equipment in the country. The assessment found that much of the equipment was not functional due to the inability of the national procurement system to supply the reagents required or provide routine maintenance and servicing.

The SUSTAIN project, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by University Research Co., LLC (URC), is a five year (2010-2015) program that supports



Laboratory technologists at Uganda's Entebbe Hospital conduct testing utilizing equipment procured by the MOH according to the standardized procurement list.

the Uganda Ministry of Health (MOH) to strengthen sustainable and innovative approaches for the delivery of quality, comprehensive HIV services at 32 healthcare facilities in the country. One of the major mandates of the SUSTAIN project is to develop laboratory infrastructure to appropriately support HIV service delivery in Uganda.

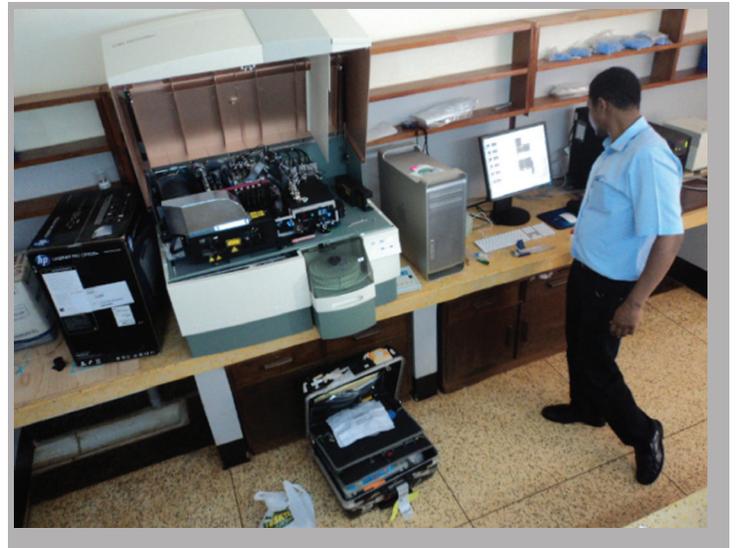
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To address the issue of non-functional laboratory equipment, SUSTAIN has initiated two primary interventions:

- **Standardizing Laboratory Equipment:** SUSTAIN supported the MOH to develop, for the first time, a standardized list of equipment and test methods allowable at each level of the healthcare delivery system. Going forward, implementing partners will only be permitted to place equipment in public laboratories if that equipment is on the standardized list. The list, if adhered to, is expected to ease the burden on the national procurement system, which will no longer be strained to maintain a large number of different types of equipment or to provide a very wide range of reagents for laboratories doing the same tests.
- **Determining Necessary Reagent Supply:** SUSTAIN also supported the MOH and other implementing partners in holding a week-long workshop to define the reagents needed from the national procurement system to maintain the standardized laboratory equipment. The workshop resulted in a quantified VEN (vital, essential, non-essential)-classified list of reagents needed. This list, the first of its kind in Uganda, will inform the development of a laboratory procurement plan for the next two years. In addition, together with the essential medicines list, the reagents list will guide most non-equipment medical procurement in Uganda and is expected not only to direct but also improve national-level laboratory logistics management.



An engineer installs HIV-testing equipment, procured for a SUSTAIN-supported laboratory according to the standardized procurement list.

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*“We should be very grateful to ourselves and the people who made this very important activity possible. Just imagine life in the lab procurement world without a guiding list”*

– Uganda Ministry of Health Officer