

# CASE STUDY

## How IAPHL has convened 7'000 professionals globally

working to improve public healthcare supply chain management.

**98%** of members likely to recommend membership. \*

**7'000**

professionals,  
and growing...

**280**

organizations  
represented



**360**

discussions  
annually

**149**

countries

## THE CHALLENGE

Millions of people do not receive essential healthcare when they need it because the right medicines are not available at the right place at the right time. This can have devastating large-scale consequences.

A key cause is that staff in clinics, hospitals and governmental health agencies tend to lack formal training and knowledge in supply chain management ("SCM").

Typically, SCM has been taken on as a supplementary task by staff who just happen to be in contact with supplies (e.g. pharmacists), and it is still rare to find SCM directorates in health systems.

## THE APPROACH

Created under the USAID | DELIVER Project implemented by JSI, IAPHL strives to "enable people working in public health supply chains, especially in the Global South, to connect, learn, and succeed."

To achieve this, IAPHL provides an online discussion platform where any professional concerned by public health supply chains (pharmacists, government officials, SCM experts, NGO leaders, pharma companies, etc.) can easily connect and share knowledge about the critical job of managing supplies in their own clinics, hospitals and countries.

## BENEFITS FOR IAPHL

IAPHL has become the undisputed global convener in the domain of public healthcare supply chain management.

Over the past decade, it has built a vibrant online community of 7'000 professionals working in NGOs, government, academia, UN agencies, and the private sector, at the local, regional, national and international levels.

IAPHL has dramatically increased the impact of every donor dollar by so many stakeholders in a trusted space and having immediate access to them.

Having a totally unrivalled outreach has also made IAPHL a highly attractive partner organization, as attested by its joint initiatives with the Humanitarian Logistics Association, People that Deliver, TechNet-21, and others.

## BENEFITS FOR THE COMMUNITY

For members practicing SCM daily in their jobs, IAPHL's platform is the best place to gain experience-based knowledge and new perspectives from other professionals facing the same realities.

For members working in NGO leadership, government agencies and the private sector, IAPHL has become the most powerful way of reaching out to target stakeholders, aligning advocacy and training efforts, and disseminating technical and educational resources.

In a 2019 survey, IAPHL members said this:

- 78% find the discussions to be always relevant and informative.
- 79% read all or most of the discussions.
- 98% likely to recommend membership.

Beyond the learning and personal development opportunities, IAPHL has created a strong sense of belonging and possibility among these previously dispersed professionals; a sense that every professional can drive change with the help of a powerful community.

## TESTIMONIAL

### Community member / Practitioner



*Nadiya Jiwa  
Pharmacist  
Baylor Children's Foundation,  
Tanzania*

"IAPHL's online discussion community is a treasure trove of knowledge and a beautiful mix of professionals eager to discuss daily challenges.

Being part of this large but tight-knit community has been so valuable for me ever since I was asked to take on medicine supply management as part of my daily function to at the Baylor Children's Foundation paediatric clinic in Mbeya, Tanzania, where I am the head pharmacist.

When you ask for advice, people from completely different worlds respond, giving you totally new perspectives and ideas. I hadn't expected community members to share their expertise and ideas so generously! I find myself bumping into new ideas all the time and conversing with people I would have never met otherwise given our relative isolation.

For someone like me it used to be all closed doors, but now I feel I can access with the world through this window of IAPHL, to bring positive change for our practice at home and share our practices with the world.

Engaging in the online discussions really helps us get better at things we do. For example, in a discussion about "reverse logistics", I realized people were talking about a practice of sharing limited resources in a more formalized way: taking medicines from facility level to larger redistribution points for re-sharing with other centers to match their needs. The dozens of exchanges in this discussion helped us reflect and draw up an effective procedure.

My wish is that healthcare supply chain professionals from all over the world continue joining our community and engage at the local, regional, national and international levels to overcome medicine shortages and other avoidable problems by sharing their lived experiences!"

## TESTIMONIAL

Community member / Government agency



*Ukamaka Okafor  
Director of Education & Training,  
Coordinator of Supply Chain Project Management Unit,  
Pharmacists' Council of Nigeria*

"IAPHL online helps me think much more broadly than before because it brings together so many people practicing at so many different levels of the public health supply chain.

The online discussions have made me find out that supply-chain management ("SCM") is not just about procurement and logistics but about a whole system which encompasses public health. The incredible concentration of professionals and real-life knowledge has taken me not only beyond what I know, but also beyond what I planned to know!

I see a lot of supply chain awareness being built now in Nigeria, and part of my responsibility as the coordinator of the SCM unit at the Pharmacists Council of Nigeria is to create demand for supply chain capacity development and satisfy pharmacists' SCM capacity. IAPHL online is a great learning platform for achieving this.

I strategically ask my mentees, fresh pharmacy graduates, to join and engage in IAPHL so that they can educate themselves and become champions of SCM. I also use the platform to encourage experienced pharmacists, who often have no formal capacity to manage the supply chain, to engage in the discussions and to take courses and certifications which bring them up to global standards.

Finally, IAPHL online helps us have our voice heard in the international discourse around public health SCM. I can bring up topics I believe are important - for instance how governments can integrate the private sector supply chain to improve universal health coverage and also how countries can develop local SCM capacities with local content to reduce dependence on external human resources both for training and practice - and put them on the radar screen of stakeholders at all levels and all over the world."

## TESTIMONIAL

### Community member / NGO leadership



*Dominique Zwinkels  
Executive Manager  
People that Deliver (PtD)*

"IAPHL's online platform is a fundamentally important service for People that Deliver (PtD), a global initiative, hosted by UNICEF, which advocates at the international and national levels for interventions that improve the demand and supply of a qualified health supply chain professionals.

Being part of IAPHL's 7'000-strong community hugely increases PtD's visibility in its target stakeholder community. It has helped us advance our mission much faster than we could have otherwise.

A big part of our job at PtD is making sure that people are getting the right tools, and IAPHL's platform makes its really easy for us to share advocacy materials and technical resources on a massive scale, like for example PtD's Theory of Change methodology which helps government agencies see how their investments in supply-chain education are directly linked to performance improvements.

By engaging in community discussions on the platform, we also help members identify gaps in their competencies, suggest courses and certifications provided by partner organizations, and contribute expertise and recommendations.

We're now exploring ways to engage even more with the IAPHL community, and are planning to set up and moderate a specialized online sub-community focused on the topic of workforce optimization.

Essentially, for any organization or professional wanting to know what's going in the health supply-chain, IAPHL is the place you go. There's nothing else like it!"

## TESTIMONIAL

### Community member / NGO leadership



*George Fenton  
Executive Director  
Humanitarian Logistics Association*

"One big thing IAPHL's online community has definitely changed for the better is the alignment between the various players in humanitarian and health supply chain logistics.

Humanitarian Logistics Association (HLA) cares a lot about this because its goal is to improve disaster preparedness and response by encouraging aid organisations, humanitarian logisticians, as well as the private, public and academic sectors to engage with each other and exchange knowledge.

In the past, a few large organizations unsuccessfully attempted to steer the humanitarian logistics space, but their overarching efforts did not connect actors at the international, regional and local levels. Because of this, smaller but critically-important organizations in this space didn't have good visibility of what the common global goal was and how to best achieve it. Bringing everyone together in IAPHL's highly inclusive online discussion community has definitely helped players throughout the system get a better sense of how they can work together and fuel each other's efforts.

IAPHL's platform has also become a powerful mechanism for transferring supply chain knowledge and skills from the international NGO community to governments - which are now seeing better control over humanitarian interventions - and the private sector - which is increasingly concerned with supply chain challenges brought about by climate change, both in the developing and developed world.

We think that there is yet a huge amount of value to be tapped from IAPHL's platform. Having the world of humanitarian and health supply-chain professionals in a single place is an extremely valuable thing, and we're planning on developing, with IAPHL's support, an integrated roster of local professionals with the right skills and availability who can be ready to intervene in crises - something no other organization has managed to put together."

## USE CASE 1: Moderated discussions

Example discussion: "The Role of Leadership in Advancing Health Supply Chain Accountability in the Public Sector"

1

### IAPHL LAUNCHES THE DISCUSSION

"We are excited to announce that the next moderated discussion will be starting..."

**Introduces the moderator:** "The discussion will be moderated by M. Ibegbunam, expert with the USAID GHSC-PSM project in Nigeria..."

**Moderator sets the rules and timeline:** "With the given definitions in mind, we look forward to your contributions over the next two weeks..."

**Moderator initiates discussion:** "Week 1 - Question 1: Who is the leader in a public-sector health supply chain system in your context? Think about ownership, responsibility and accountability, not just nominal titles." ...

2

### THE COMMUNITY ENGAGES

**Dozens of high-quality contributions (400 words on avg.), thousands of views, over 10 days, from 14 countries.**

From members working as government officials, warehouse managers, SCM consultants, technical advisors, management professors, etc.

...working in NGOs, government agencies, academia, UN agencies, and the private sector.

3

### MEMBERS SHARE OPINIONS AND EXPERIENCES

- identification of the barriers to effective SCM leadership: lack of real authority (vs. accountability), leadership based on length-of-service vs. qualifications...

- possible solutions: adaptive leadership, incentive strategies, performance measurements, penalties for poor performance, encouraging leaders to ask themselves the right questions...

- the importance of the system as a whole: transparency, accountability, continuous dialogue, data systems...

- "We are all leaders within our areas of influence within the health supply chain space!"

4

### OUTCOME

**Accelerated progress towards IAPHL's vision**

- Leadership issues pushed to the **forefront** of peoples' minds

- **Change** ignited from all sides (i.e. not only bottom-up/top-down)

- Stakeholders **empowered** by realization that everyone can influence and lead



## USE CASE 2: Spontaneous member-led discussions

Example discussion: "Reverse logistics" topic

1

### A MEMBER ASKS FOR ADVICE

"How do you handle medicines that have been returned to the store ('reverse logistics') but are not expired?"

*(Eunice O., Pharmacist in an NGO, Uganda)*

2

### THE COMMUNITY ENGAGES

**30 member contributions, over 30 days, from 16 countries.**

From members working as logistics and procurement specialists, pharmacists, consultants, researchers, etc.

...working in NGOs, government agencies, academia, UN agencies, and the private sector.

3

### THE COMMUNITY SHARES CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE

- Expiry/damage/quality considerations
  - How to book returns in the ledger system
  - Negotiating return rules with suppliers
  - Suggested operating procedures (SOPs)
  - Example guidelines and textbooks
  - Redirecting excess to other facilities
  - Requalification analyses
  - Potential as a revenue market
- ... and also lots of encouragement!"

4

### OUTCOME

**Step achievement of IAPHL's mission**

- Hundreds/thousands of viewing members gained **concrete knowledge**
- Confirmation that IAPHL is the **best place to be** and to learn
- Stakeholders **empowered** by the support of a tight-knit community
- Ultimately, **fewer deaths** due to medicine shortages



## USE CASE 3: Requests for support

Example discussion: "Maintaining the quality of thermolabile drugs"

1

### A MEMBER ASKS FOR HELP

"Where I work, I noticed that the temperature of the refrigerator never goes below 12°C. Knowing that the recommended storage temperature for thermolabile drugs is 2-8°C, this gives me concern. Is there anything that can be done to improve on this? Buying another refrigerator is not feasible. Is it possible to supplement with ice packs?"

*(Enitan A., Community Pharmacist, Nigeria)*

2

### THE COMMUNITY ENGAGES

**20 member contributions, in under 24 hours, from 11 countries.**

From members working as logisticians, quality controllers, lab technicians, pharmacists, consultants, etc.

...working in NGOs, government agencies, academia, UN agencies, and the private sector.

3

### THE COMMUNITY SHARES CONTEXTUAL KNOWLEDGE

- quick fixes & tricks to try out
  - technical checklists
  - respectful counter-suggestions
  - bad practices to avoid
  - reminders of best practices (e.g. Preventive Maintenance of Cold Chain Equipment)
- ... and also lots of encouragement!

4

### OUTCOME

**Medicine shortages and spoilages averted**

- Hundreds of members were probably facing this problem, and can now **fix** it
- Confirmation that IAPHL is a safe and **useful** place to be for professionals
- Stakeholders **empowered** by the reactivity of empathetic professional peers