



# DIGITAL SOLUTIONS AT THEIR FINGERTIPS

Using Technology to Improve Medicine Availability in South Africa

GHSC-TA

Professional Nurse Tauhlole Masemola works at Thusong Gateway Clinic, located outside Lichtenburg in South Africa's North West province. Thusong Gateway Clinic, like many other public primary health care (PHC) facilities, is the first stop for treatment for many South Africans. The clinic provides access to care for a variety of conditions and the medicines to treat those conditions, such as anti-retrovirals (ARVs) and medicines used to treat tuberculosis (TB). Like other PHC facilities, Thusong Gateway Clinic was using outdated paper-based systems to keep track of the medicines they have in stock, contributing to stock-outs. This, in turn, made it difficult for the hospital pharmacy that supplies Thusong Gateway Clinic to forecast when the clinic might reorder medicines, meaning the pharmacy did not always have the medicines in stock when the clinic needed them—leaving patients at risk of going without the life-saving treatments they need.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Global Health Supply Chain Program – Technical Assistance (GHSC-TA) is working with Thusong Gateway Clinic to improve their stock management processes by combining the use of SVS with new

supply planning and replenishment processes. GHSC-TA provides technical assistance to the development and implementation of a digital stock-taking solution and medicine availability monitoring tool called Stock Visibility System (SVS). SVS is an innovative web-based management tool with a mobile application that is used by PHCs in eight provinces across South Africa to capture and monitor medicine availability. Health care providers like Nurse Masemola record stock levels at their clinics on the SVS application on a regular basis. The data is synchronized in real time to a cloud-based server where it is available to view by stakeholders at all levels of the supply chain, including the pharmacies that supply PHC clinics. When used correctly, SVS ensures that essential medicines are always in stock at the facilities where they are needed.

**“[With SVS], you always have enough stock. You won't run out.”**

*– Nurse Masemola*

For Nurse Masemola, the integration of SVS into Thusong Gateway Clinic’s stock management procedures has been critical to improving the quality of care at the facility. According to him, “[With SVS], you always have enough stock. You won’t run out.” In the past, Nurse Masemola would reorder medicines and other supplies when he noticed they were low. He chose the quantity to order based on his years of experience and personal observations of how many patients were coming to the clinic in need of that particular treatment. The result was that sometimes he ordered too many medicines and other times ordered too few. Now, by using SVS to keep track of the clinic’s stock, he can use the built-in ordering function to better inform his orders. As he captures his stock levels, Nurse Masemola receives alerts when his stock is running low, so he knows when to reorder certain medicines and how much to reorder. Thusong Gateway Clinic has also worked with GHSC-TA to determine the quantity of each medicine that the clinic should have on hand at all times. When Nurse Masemola places an order for a medicine that is at the minimum level, the application prompts him to order just enough stock to get his level back up to the maximum amount.

With GHSC-TA support, Nurse Masemola is now fully equipped to better manage stock at Thusong Gateway Clinic on the SVS application. By capturing stock availability and placing replenishment orders digitally, Nurse Masemola is less likely to make a mistake and more likely to have the medicines in stock that his patients need. Moving forward, Thusong Gateway Clinic’s patients will receive their medicines on time, contributing to the successful management of HIV/AIDs, TB, and other diseases.

