**Terms of Reference for [country name]’s Forecasting and Supply Planning Team**

**Background**

Forecasting and supply planning are critical to the uninterrupted availability of health commodities. Through the translation of programmatic targets to commodity and financial requirements, these essential supply chain functions help programmes to 1) develop health commodities budgets and procurement plans, 2) mobilize adequate financial resources to meet health commodities needs 3) negotiate prices with suppliers and, 4) generate the data needed to facilitate production planning by manufacturers. Programmes that develop accurate and responsive forecasts and supply plans are more likely to avert stockouts and product expiries. The development and implementation of these accurate and responsive forecasts and supply plans is dependent on the availability of trained and motivated human resources with clearly defined terms of reference. Overall, coordination of forecasting and supply planning activities are proven to strengthen the forecast and supply planning leading to better accuracy.

The FSP team in [country name] is formed as a working group under the leadership of the [National Logistics Working Group (NLWG) or Procurement and Supply Management Technical Working Group (PSM TWG) or (write designated responsible unit name) within the Ministry of Health (MOH)] and has the main role to coordinate and implement forecasting and supply planning processes. The specific responsibilities of the team are to:

1. Develop workplan for forecasting and supply planning activities
2. Organize preparatory activities for forecasting and supply planning exercises, including programme description, scope definition, data gathering, obtaining stakeholders’ inputs through consultations and finalization of essential data and assumptions
3. Generate forecasts, and supply plans, support resource mobilization and eventual operationalization of the forecast and supply plan
4. Review and monitor FSP performance, including the development and implementation of improvement plans
5. Advocate for the definition and adoption of forecasting and supply planning procedures, team members' training and adoption of applicable innovations
6. Liaise with and leverage skills and expertise available in other programme areas to ensure alignment and integration
7. Support programme to introduce or switch products/programmatic approach

**Purpose**

To ensure effective coordination of forecasting and supply planning in [country name], this terms of reference outlines the governance structure, membership, roles and responsibilities, approach to work planning and how the performance the FSP team will be monitored.

**Governance**

The FSP team will report to the [National Logistics Working Group (NLWG) or Procurement and Supply Management Technical Working Group (PSM TWG) or (write designated responsible entity name) within the Ministry of Health (MOH)]. The chairperson and the secretary of the FSP team will be identified [write the title of the head of the entity with leadership oversight] in consultation with other immunization partners. The chairperson will be a government official while the secretary can come from immunization partners.

**Membership**

The FSP team will include 3-5 individuals with expertise in immunization supply chain management and experience in health programme planning and implementation. The team’s activities will be driven by the Chairperson, who will also be a member of the [NLWG and/or PSM TWG and/or a staff of the designated entity within the MOH]. The FSP team will collaborate with individuals/organizations/ministries with requisite skills and expertise that are external to the team as needed. Specifically, individuals with expertise and experience in one or more of the areas listed below will be considered for membership of the team.

* Forecasting
* Supply Planning
* Pharmaceutical management
* Pipeline monitoring
* Procurement
* Stock Management
* Cold Chain Management
* Transportation and Distribution
* Logistics Management Information System (LMIS)
* Data Analysis and Management (both supply chain and program data)
* Immunization Programme Management and Implementation

**Roles and Responsibilities**

1. **Develop workplan for forecasting and supply planning activities**

* Develop costed workplan that is informed by FSP improvement plan
* Disseminate and advocate for integration of workplan activities into broader EPI plans

1. **Organize preparatory activities for forecasting and supply planning exercises, including programme description, scope definition, data gathering, obtaining stakeholders’ inputs through consultations and finalization of essential data and assumptions**

* Work with the programme team to describe programme, define scope, gather, adjust and ratify forecasting and supply planning data
* Work with the programme team to define and adjust forecasting, supply planning assumptions, and ensure that the assumptions are realistic and evidence-based
* Decide on the commodity forecasting methodology including, tools in consultation with immunization stakeholders

1. **Generate forecasts, supply plans, and facilitate implementation**

* Conduct forecasting and supply planning including, i) estimation of forecasts, ii) estimation of commodity requirements and associated costs and, iii) development of shipments plan
* Present forecasting and supply results to immunization stakeholders and secure their endorsement
* Develop forecasting and supply planning report
* Advocate for funding
* Ensure the potential changes in commodity handling practices following forecasting and supply planning exercise are timely communicated to health facilities
* Ensure costed supply plan informs government budget and strategic plans
* Ensure forecasting assumptions inform actual commodity allocation[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Facilitate harmonization of forecast and supply plans across all health programs in the country

1. **Review and monitor the performance of forecasts and supply plans including development of improvement plans**

* Review forecast and supply plan based on agreed timeline
* Monitor the implementation of forecast in line with agreed KPIs[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Identify forecasting and supply planning-related challenges and develop improvement plans[[3]](#footnote-3).
* Develop and implement strategies to improve forecasting and supply planning

1. **Advocate for definition and adoption of forecasting and supply planning procedures, team members’ trainings and adoption of appropriate innovations**

* Revise SOPs and, if relevant, develop missing ones for forecasting and supply planning activities.
* Identify training needs and advocate for the training of FSP team members to address specific capacity gap
* Monitor emerging trends in forecasting and supply planning and advocate for adoption of best practices
* Track market trends and product innovations to guide programmatic decisions and product choice

1. Liaise with and leverage skills and expertise available in other programme areas to ensure alignment and integration
2. **Support initiatives to introduce or switch products/programmatic approach**

* Support efforts to introduce or switch to new products including, the development of proposals and operational guidance documents
* Provide thought leadership on commodity requirements and associated financial implications of new policies

**Work plan**

The FSP team will develop a costed annual work plan to guide the activities of the team. The activities of the team will be incorporated into the workplan of the [National Logistics Working Group (NLWG) or Procurement and Supply Management Technical Working Group (PSM TWG) or (write designated responsible entity name) within the Ministry of Health (MOH)]. The timelines for activities will be fixed such that they are completed on time (for example, to meet the country’s budgeting, procurement, and fund release timelines etc).

**Meetings**

The meeting of the FSP team will be in line with the developed work plan. The FSP chairperson in collaboration with the secretary will coordinate the development of meeting agenda, sending of meeting invitations, documentation and circulation of meeting minutes and monitoring of the implementation of action plans. The team will meet at least every [write the frequency of meetings – month, two months etc.] with more frequent meetings when planning for the periodic (usually annual) forecasting and supply planning exercise. Ad-hoc meetings can also be organized to address issues that were not anticipated while developing the annual work plan.

In addition to the regular meetings, the team may need to organize consultation meetings with relevant subject matter experts to collect inputs through individual consultations and/or stakeholders’ workshop.

**Documentation, dissemination, and reporting**

The secretary of the FSP team is directly responsible for sharing of invitations and meeting agenda, documenting meeting proceedings, sharing of the meeting minutes including action items and following up with the implementation of action items. Meeting minutes will be finalized and disseminated within one week of holding a meeting. The FSP Chairperson must ensure that the team reports all their activities to the [NLWG and/or PSM TWG and/or a staff of the designated entity within the MOH] on a regular basis.

**Decision‐making and recommendations**

Decisions and recommendations will be made through consensus following thorough technical review including, programmatic considerations. All decisions and recommendations by the FSP team are subject to final approval by the [National Logistics Working Group (NLWG) or Procurement and Supply Management Technical Working Group (PSM TWG) or (write designated responsible entity name) within the Ministry of Health (MOH)].

**Performance Monitoring**

The performance of the FSP team will also be monitored by evaluating 1) convenance of regular meetings in line with workplan with evidence of meeting minutes, 2) the proportion of work plan activities implemented by deadline, and 3) tracking of the core forecasting and supply planning key performance indicators (for example, forecast accuracy, supply plan accuracy etc.).

**Amendment and Revision**

The review/revision of the terms of reference will be initiated and implemented [indicate frequency e.g. annually] by the FSP team in consultation with the [National Logistics Working Group (NLWG) or Procurement and Supply Management Technical Working Group (PSM TWG) or (write designated responsible entity name) within the Ministry of Health (MOH)]. All revisions must be approved by the [Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) team or (write designated responsible entity name) within the Ministry of Health (MOH)].

1. Includes initiating and confirming that assumptions in commodity allocation tool or software are revised ahead of forecast implementation [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Includes monitoring the alignment of forecasting assumptions with actual program data [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For example, lack of accurate and reliable data can inform advocacy for improvements in data quality. Also lack of reliable wastage rates data can inform commissioning of a wastage study to gain a better understanding of wastage rates and the drivers of wastage. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)