

REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

UPDATE ON THE STATE OF MEDICINES AND OTHER MEDICAL SUPPLIES IN THE COUNTRY

STATEMENT BY THE ASSISTANT MINISTER OF HEALTH
HON. LAWRENCE OOKEDITSE

PARLIAMENT — 28 JULY 2026

1. Introduction

1. Mr Speaker, I rise today to update this Honourable House and the nation on the current situation regarding the availability of medicines in our public health facilities, and to outline the measures Government is implementing to stabilise and strengthen the national medicines supply system.
2. Honourable Members will appreciate that access to essential medicines is one of the cornerstones of a functional health system. Government fully recognises the anxiety, frustration and, at times, real hardship experienced by patients and their families whenever medicines are unavailable. These concerns are valid, and we do not take them lightly. We assure this House that restoring a reliable supply of medicines remains our number one priority, and we will not rest until this milestone is achieved.

2. Current Status of the Medicines Supply Situation

3. Mr Speaker, despite challenges we are currently facing, I am pleased to report that Government has made encouraging progress in stabilising the medicines supply situation. In recent weeks, significant quantities of critical medicines have arrived in the country.
4. These include essential antibiotics, and medicines for the treatment of blood pressure, diabetes, pain and allergies. As an example, just in the current month, we received a 7-month supply of the much-awaited antibiotics, as well as first line antihypertensives such as furosemide, HCT and amlodipine, individually and in combination. We have also received first line antidiabetics such as metformin, among others. Accordingly, since June 2026, the availability of diabetes medicines has improved from 31% to 44%, heart health medicines from 17% to 38%, and anti-infective products from 22% to 36%, when compared to three months ago, when the situation was really bad.
5. With these recent arrivals and the others anticipated in the coming weeks, we do not expect any shortages of anti-hypertensives, anti-diabetics and antibiotics for the next six to seven months. As I have already indicated, this will give us time to make orders for more without any pressure.

3. Recent Deliveries and Outlook

6. Last Thursday we received more of the anti-allergy medicines and long-awaited pain management products. On the HIV space, we continue to receive the core first line drugs such as dolutegravir-based formulations, including dual therapy, with most deliveries expected to be completed by the end of this month. Global API challenges for some second line drugs have been noted but should be resolved in the coming month. Moreover, we have 33 line items in transit comprising IV fluids, anaesthesia medications, as well as emergency drugs. We expect over 45 other line items to be ready for shipping starting next week.
7. Based on the current consumption patterns, these medicines are expected to sustain national requirements for approximately six to seven months. This represents a major milestone in restoring confidence in the public medicines supply system and provides a much-needed buffer as broader reforms continue to take effect. Working with our international partners, as well as local and regional suppliers, a long-term supply plan is taking shape, helping to significantly bring down the price of these commodities.
8. Additional consignments of other medicines continue to arrive, with further deliveries expected all the way until September 2026. We will continue to update the nation as these supplies continue to arrive.

4. Orthopaedic Procedures for Trauma Patients

9. Honourable Members, we are aware of delays in conducting orthopaedic procedures on trauma patients in our health facilities, and we are mindful of the pain, anxiety and disruption this has caused for these patients and their families. This delay was due to a shortage of funds for the procurement of implants. I am pleased, however, to report that we have since been able to source funds to pay our local suppliers for orthopaedic implants. We expect that orthopaedic procedures for trauma patients will resume within a month. While this is encouraging news, we acknowledge that challenges remain with our arthroplasty procedures, and we are working to address these as well.

5. Areas Requiring Further Improvement

10. Mr Speaker, in the spirit of transparency, I must be candid that some areas remain a genuine concern, including IV fluids, medicines for asthma, sexual reproductive health conditions, eye health conditions, as well as non-drug items such as POP, bandages, and surgical and disposable gloves. We recognise the difficulty and worry this causes for patients and health workers who depend on these items, and we do not underestimate it. Orders have been made, and our teams are actively following up with suppliers to secure immediate deliveries. For asthma medicines specifically, delivery is expected next week.

6. Immediate Interventions by Government

11. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, Government has implemented several immediate interventions to restore medicine availability. In March 2026, the Ministry of Finance granted the Ministry of Health

an exemption from selected provisions of the Public Procurement Act through Statutory Instrument No. 35 of 2026. This has provided greater flexibility for strategic procurement while maintaining transparency, accountability and preference for locally manufactured medicines where appropriate.

12. Emergency procurement has been undertaken both locally and internationally to replenish depleted stocks. Throughout this process, Government has ensured that all medicines procured are registered or appropriately authorised by the Botswana Medicines Regulatory Authority to guarantee their safety, quality and efficacy.
13. Government has also prioritised timely payment of suppliers, with the Ministry of Health, working with the Ministry of Finance, expediting payment processes to meet the prescribed thirty-day service standard. This intervention is rebuilding supplier confidence and improving the reliability of deliveries.
14. Honourable Members, the Ministry of Health has intensified engagement with local suppliers to strengthen partnerships, address supply challenges and explore opportunities to expand domestic pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity. It must be said that these challenges have, in large measure, been driven by cash flow constraints within Government. I am encouraged to report that this position is now improving, which gives us greater optimism that the situation will continue to strengthen in the months ahead. I also wish to note that we have restructured our systems to eliminate wastage and to address the unfairly high prices that have, in the past, resulted from monopolies and territorial supply agreements. We are confident that this restructuring will benefit the country for the foreseeable future.

7. Improving Distribution

15. Government continues to outsource the primary distribution of medicines from CMS to 130 health facilities across the country. Performance standards require scheduled deliveries within seventy-two hours and emergency deliveries within twenty-four hours. We are also working closely with the Ministry of Local Government and Traditional Affairs to strengthen last-mile distribution from districts to clinics and health posts.

8. Medium-Term Reforms

16. Mr Speaker, beyond these immediate interventions, Government is implementing medium-term reforms designed to build greater resilience within the medicines supply chain. CMS is continuing to use international pooled procurement mechanisms through organisations such as UNICEF, UNFPA, the Global Drug Facility and the Global Fund to secure medicines at competitive prices. Government is also committed to participating in the SADC Pooled Procurement Services.
17. The Ministry of Health is in the process of developing long-term framework contracts with both local and international suppliers to ensure more predictable and sustainable medicine supplies. Government is also further pursuing Government-to-Government partnerships with friendly nations

such as the United States of America and the United Arab Emirates to improve access to essential medical supplies, reagents and equipment, while also securing more affordable pricing arrangements.

9. Long-Term Transformation of the Central Medical Stores

18. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, the long-term solution lies in transforming the entire medicines supply system. Government has therefore prioritised comprehensive reform of the Central Medical Stores under the Botswana Economic Transformation Programme.
19. These reforms include modernising governance structures, strengthening procurement systems, introducing an Electronic Logistics Management Information System (e-LMIS) with track-and-trace capability to provide real-time visibility of medicine stocks, improving warehousing and logistics infrastructure, and building sustainable supply chain capacity. The roll-out of the e-LMIS is aimed at covering approximately 20% of the facilities that consume 80% of medical supplies. This will significantly improve forecasting accuracy, inventory management, traceability and accountability of stocks.
20. In addition, Government is working with the World Health Organization and the World Bank to strengthen the governance and leadership model of the Central Medical Stores, thereby enhancing efficiency, transparency and institutional performance.

10. Performance in Priority Programmes

21. Honourable Members, while challenges remain, there are encouraging signs of improvement. Strong performance has been maintained in several priority programmes, including vaccines under the Expanded Programme on Immunisation, antiretroviral medicines and cancer medicines. The Ministry will continue to closely monitor medicine availability across the country and implement further corrective measures wherever necessary, including on observed delays in the distribution of medicines from the CMS to health facilities.

11. Enhancing Medicines Security

22. In order to improve the security of our medicines, the Ministry is working on a project to ensure enhanced security surveillance by installing CCTVs in hospital pharmacies and other areas where medicines are stored. This will help us ensure that all medicines destined for our patients reach them.

12. Promoting Healthy Lifestyles and Prevention

23. Mr Speaker, Honourable Members, even as Government works to secure and stabilise the supply of medicines, we must also address the demand side of this equation. A significant and growing share of our medicines burden, particularly for hypertension, diabetes and related complications, is driven by non-communicable diseases that are, in large part, preventable. I therefore take this opportunity to urge all Batswana to embrace healthier lifestyles: to eat balanced diets, reduce salt, sugar and fatty foods, engage in regular physical activity, avoid tobacco and excessive alcohol use, and attend routine

health screenings. Prevention is, quite simply, far cheaper and kinder than treatment. Every case of hypertension or diabetes we prevent through healthy living is one less patient competing for scarce medicines, and one less family burdened by illness. Government will continue to strengthen public health promotion and screening programmes, but this is also a shared responsibility, and I encourage every citizen, every family and every community to play their part in building a healthier Botswana.

13. Conclusion

24. In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I wish to assure this Honourable House and the nation at large that Government understands what these shortages have meant for ordinary Batswana, and that we are fully committed to restoring a stable, reliable and sustainable medicines supply system. We do not underestimate the road still ahead of us, but we approach it with resolve.
25. The arrival of considerable quantities of antibiotics, blood pressure medicines and diabetes medicines, which have been in short supply for some time, marks an important turning point in our efforts to stabilise medicine availability. Together with the additional consignments expected over the coming weeks and the comprehensive reforms already underway, we are confident that the country is steadily moving towards a more resilient pharmaceutical supply system capable of meeting the healthcare needs of all Batswana.
26. Government remains committed to ensuring that every citizen has timely access to safe, effective and quality medicines. We are hopeful, and we have real reason to be: the progress made in recent weeks shows what is possible when Government, our partners and suppliers work together with urgency. We will continue to keep this Honourable House informed of the progress being made.

I thank you, Mr Speaker.