Bangladesh Implements Updated Standards for Medicines Testing

ISO/IEC 17025 was last revised in 2005, but the 2017 update is considered to be the first significant change since the standards were established in 1999. According to the International Organization for Standardization, ISO/IEC 17025: 2017 covers technical changes, vocabulary, and developments in IT techniques, and also integrates the latest version of related ISO standards for quality management.

Bangladesh continues to demonstrate that investments in ISO/IEC accreditation can provide a significant boost to public health programming in low- and middle-income countries.

To ensure NCL could meet and maintain the new standards, DGDA turned to the Promoting the Quality of Medicines (PQM) program, which is funded by U.S. Agency for International Development and implemented by USP. PQM’s technical assistance primarily comprised technical training on the testing methods and laboratory management practices included in the ISO 17025:2017 standards. The efforts built on 3 years of collaboration between DGDA and PQM on laboratory strengthening.

NCL Head of Quality Assurance, Dr. Md. Harun-Or-Rashid, underscores that the laboratory’s accreditation success puts it squarely on track for its next goal. “This is not the end, but rather the beginning of another journey to achieve WHO prequalification,” he advises, specifying this would make the laboratory eligible to perform testing for medicines procured by the Global Fund. The Global Fund’s purchase of medicines to fight AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria reached about US $2 billion globally in 2017.

Dr. Samina Choudhury, a Project Management Specialist in the USAID/Bangladesh Office of Population, Health, Nutrition and Education, concludes by looking at accreditation in the larger context of public health impact: “This achievement increases the availability of quality health products and related technologies, ultimately contributing to the pursuit of universal health coverage,” which Choudhury distinguishes as a key component of USAID/Bangladesh’s Country Development Strategy.

The Promoting the Quality of Medicines (PQM) program is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by USP. The PQM program helps low- and middle-income countries strengthen health systems by building capacity in the regulation and manufacture of medical products. This helps increase availability of lifesaving, quality-assured medicines that are critical to accelerating universal health coverage, ensuring healthy lives, and promoting well-being for all people of all ages. For more information, visit pqm.org.