IMMUNIZATION SUPPLY CHAIN AND LOGISTICS

A NEGLECTED BUT ESSENTIAL SYSTEM FOR NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMMES



A CALL-TO-ACTION

FOR NATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY BY
THE WHO IMMUNIZATION PRACTICES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

GENEVA. SWITZERLAND - MARCH 2014







Immunization Supply Chain and Logistics (ISCL) systems; otherwise, the benefits of immunization programmes will be jeopardized by obstacles limiting access to, and use of, effective vaccines.

Call-to-Action

he Immunization Supply Chain and Logistics (ISCL) systems, which were designed in the 1980s, have supported the achievement of acceptable vaccination coverage, using coping mechanisms to overcome enduring challenges in vaccine storage, distribution and management. The dedication, intelligence and creativity of health workers acting within outdated ISCL systems have substituted for much-needed assets and capital. Despite many efforts, national immunization programmes, already struggling to meet the demands of routine immunization and supplemental campaigns, may not be in the best position to respond to the introduction of all the new vaccines.

A widening variety of new vaccines and immunization schedules, a diversity of service delivery strategies, an expanding target population, increased cold-chain infrastructure requirements and insufficient funding, are just a few of the new realities that will further stress ISCL systems, which were initially designed to manage fewer, less expensive and less bulky vaccines and related supplies. Existing systems cannot keep pace with the changing landscape of national immunization programmes, resulting in stock-outs, potential administration of ineffective vaccines, avoidable wastage and inadequate cold-chain capacity, all of which have considerable coverage, performance and cost implications. These inefficiencies not only hinder the ability to provide much-needed immunizations, they also yield a lower return in health outcomes for those investing in the research, production, procurement and delivery of vaccines, threatening the dependability of future funding sources.

The growth in complexity of immunization programmes is occurring at the same time as the development and application of innovative supply chain strategies and technology, especially in the private sector. In the public sector, national immunization programmes, and the global community that supports them, have an opportunity to improve their performance and a mandate to provide the right vaccines in the right quantities, in the right condition, at the right time, in the right place and at the right supply chain cost.

Recommendations

National immunization programmes

Measure and monitor the health of the ISCL system

Apply the Effective Vaccine Management (EVM) Initiative tool and process to assess the state of the ISCL system, identifying strengths and weaknesses to prioritize improvements. Emphasize routine programme monitoring and performance improvement.

Plan and implement improvements

Prepare and implement improvement plans that address system weaknesses with pragmatic responses, and introducing supply chain innovations that produce increased visibility and flexibility to manage future changes in ISCL systems.

Global community of partners

Increase awareness and investment

Call attention to the complexities of ISCL systems. Increase funding to recruit, train and incentivize people and prioritize the collection and analysis of data needed to run national immunization programmes.

Address ISCL in immunization recommendations

Place implementation issues and evidence of ISCL impacts into the core of immunization recommendations and decision-making.

Harmonize ISCL systems

Take purposeful advantage of new vaccination initiatives, to build upon and strengthen an integrated ISCL system across programmes.

Resolve knowledge gaps to accelerate learning

Highlight ISCL knowledge gaps, identify what is working, create learning opportunities and accelerate the spread of proven approaches.

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