

Organisation of Vaccine supply

Source: Mid Level Management Course for EPI Managers, Module 8: Cold Chain Management, World Health Organisation, 2004

➤ Collection method

This procedure consists of collecting vaccines and other supplies from the higher level health facilities (e.g.: health centre collects supplies from district stores).

The advantages of this strategy are:

- Issuing officers at the stores meet frequently with field personnel or health centre staff, allowing for an exchange of views and collection of data on the balance of supplies in their respective facilities
- Personnel at central level are not responsible for transporting vaccines to peripheral health units
- The users are responsible for collecting their own supplies on a regular basis.

Some potential inconveniences are:

- Strict collection schedules and timetables must be established and adhered to, lest the collector finds the store man absent
- A control system for availability of stocks must be in place, lest the collector finds the store temporarily in short of supply
- Some health centres might find it difficult to organise their own transport (lack of funds, breakdown of vehicles, etc.)
- Overall, collection could prove to be more expensive, because each health centre has to transport its own supplies.

➤ Method of delivery of supplies

This system requires the stores at higher-level health structures to deliver supplies to stores at lower levels and to peripheral health units.

The advantages of the delivery system are as follows:

- Group delivery brings down transport costs
- Delivery and supervision visits to health centres can be combined
- Health centre personnel will have more time for immunisation activities
- It is easier to deliver large quantities of supplies or items in bulk, providing there are adequate vehicles for the purpose.

The disadvantages include:

- The central store must have at least one large vehicle for group deliveries, or sub- contract the job to a private transport company
- The central store might not have enough vaccines to deliver to all the health centres
- Delays in delivery might occur in cases of large numbers of health centres, long distances or vehicle breakdowns. This would inevitably lead to stock shortages for the receiving facilities.
- This method may require additional equipment such as cold boxes and icepacks.
- In certain circumstances, a refrigerated vehicle may be needed to ensure regular deliveries.

In practice, a combination of the two supply methods may achieve more flexibility in the supply system. Uniformity of the mode of supply is unlikely because it depends on local conditions. Whatever the chosen mode of supply, it is important to plan for a regular supply for every peripheral unit.