



Case Study Series 4

Anticipating Problems and Proactiveness

Case 2:

Proactive Decision-Making in Vaccine Procurement for Hajj Pilgrims

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June 2024

Series Editor: Dr. Hasan Muhammad Baniamin

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SIPG-Y24-S4-002

The cases for this series are collected by interviewing civil servants working in different South Asian countries. This collection initiative is an attempt to document different problem anticipation and proactive initiatives taken by civil servants. If you are aware of other such instances of proactive acts, please send us an email (mashrur.sipg@gmail.com), and we will get back to you to collect more information.

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The Problem of Vaccine Wastage Amid Uncertain Pilgrim (Hajj) Registrations

In public health management, especially within mass vaccination programs, aligning procurement strategies with the unpredictability of real-world scenarios is a significant challenge. This case study examines a noteworthy instance from Bangladesh, where strategic foresight in vaccine procurement for the annual Hajj pilgrimage showcased effective proactive governance. Every year, thousands of Bangladeshi Muslims undertake the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. To protect these pilgrims from infectious diseases such as seasonal influenza and meningitis, the Bangladeshi government implements a mass vaccination program. Traditionally, the government procured vaccines with a six-month shelf life, catering to the immediate needs of the upcoming Hajj season. The primary challenge arose from the variability in the number of pilgrims each year, which led to substantial fluctuations in vaccine demand. For example, in 2024, while the government prepared to vaccinate an allocated quota of 127,198 pilgrims, registrations lagged at 79,862 by mid-February.

Consequently, the procurement of 130,000 doses, based on the six-month validity vaccines, posed a significant risk of wastage. This scenario highlighted a potential loss of valuable medical resources and flagged concerns over the expenditure of approximately 11 crore BDT (Bangladeshi Taka), equivalent to nearly one million USD (United States Dollars), underscoring a pressing need for a more adaptable procurement strategy.

Vaccine Procurement and A Proactive Shift In Strategy

The turning point in this narrative was the intervention by Mr. X from the Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD), who identified the looming risk and spearheaded a shift in the procurement strategy. By advocating for a procurement process that included the purchase of vaccines with a one-year validity, Mr. X introduced a solution that offered both flexibility and foresight. This approach allowed the government to adjust to the actual number of pilgrim registrations, thereby optimizing the use of resources and minimizing wastage.

PROBLEM

Purchasing vaccines with a 6-month validity for Hajj pilgrims risked wasting 70,000 to 100,000 doses due to variable registration numbers

SOLUTION

Switching to vaccines with 1-year validity ensured that any unused dose could be used in future, optimizing resource utilization.

OUTCOME

This proactive decision prevented vaccine wastage and saved significant government funds

The proposal catalyzed a strategic discussion among key stakeholders, culminating in an inter-ministerial meeting that included representatives from the Health Service Division, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Directorate General of Health Services, and other pertinent agencies. The collective decision to transition to one-year validity vaccines marked a significant policy shift, embodying a proactive approach to public health planning.

The implementation of this new strategy not only reduced the risk of vaccine wastage but also demonstrated a strong commitment to efficient resource management and fiscal responsibility. By extending the vaccines' usability, the government protected its investment and improved readiness for the following year's pilgrimage or other vaccination needs. This strategic shift highlights the importance of adaptability and resourcefulness in public health management. It shows how evidence-based decision-making and stakeholder collaboration can lead to operational efficiencies, better resource utilization, and a culture of proactive governance

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