



Establishing Demonstration Centers for Cross Learning

Community Health Center (CHC) Jamtara in Jharkhand state, India, is a cold chain point from where vaccines are distributed to immunization session sites. In the past this health facility had to deal with frequent stock-outs and vaccine wastage. Due to mismanagement of vaccine stocks, immunization sessions frequently got cancelled or postponed, leaving the beneficiaries unserved. In addition, facility team members were unaware of correct waste handling practices and injection safety protocols.

In 2010, the USAID-funded Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program (MCHIP) undertook a baseline survey wherein all the basic performance and quality indicators were assessed, and facilities were ranked on the basis of these indicators. The concept behind this survey was to identify cold chain points that could serve as demonstration centers to illustrate/demonstrate correct practices in cold chain management to other poor-performing health centers.

After analysis, MCHIP chose CHC Jamtara to develop and promote as a demonstration center. This particular facility was selected because of its available infrastructure, commitment of health staff and feasibility of hosting cross-learning visits of health functionaries from neighboring health centers. After due agreement from decision-makers and health officials, rigorous efforts were initiated by the facility staff beginning in January 2011, under the leadership of the Medical Officer In-Charge and the District Immunization Officer. The MCHIP team provided day-to-day technical support in order to develop the facility as a demonstration center.

The objective was to attain a level at which all immunization-related practices met defined standards in line with the policies and guidelines established by national- (Indian Public Health Standards) and state-level health ministries.

The process started with repeated sensitization of concerned functionaries through use of job aids (developed by MCHIP), demonstrations and mentoring on such practices as developing comprehensive micro-plans for ensuring that services reach all beneficiaries, correct placement of cold chain equipment, correct storage of vaccines, preventive maintenance of cold chain equipment, packing of vaccine carriers for outreach sessions, maintenance of updated records of vaccine stocks, injection safety measures and correct disposal of immunization waste. Government funds were leveraged for strengthening of the available infrastructure and procurement of necessary materials.

Improvements were measured using a Readiness Assessment Checklist (RAC), with 30 mandatory and 40 desirable indicators, designed to capture not only the status of immunization program inventory, but also processes and practices. The required status was achieved by September 2011 and followed up for another month to ensure sustainability before declaring the facility a demonstration center for all four immunization thematic areas (program management, cold chain and vaccine management, immunization safety, and waste disposal management and records and reports).

Similarly, two more cold chain points in Jharkhand and five in Uttar Pradesh were developed as demonstration centers. Both inter- and intra-district cross-learning visits for **263** health functionaries from other health facilities were organized (74 in Jharkhand and 189 in Uttar Pradesh), during which they observed demonstration of correct practices and were trained on standards for immunization program. Training sessions were followed by facility staff sharing experiences in developing this demonstration center and in-depth discussion on issues and solutions. The entire process was enthusiastically facilitated by the staff members themselves. An important aspect of cross-learning was resolution of problems encountered on a day-to-day basis through use of locally available resources and solutions.

Visiting staff gave encouraging feedback on enhanced knowledge and motivation for improving the immunization-related practices at their respective health facilities. This initiative made an important contribution to MCHIP's objective of helping strengthen the quality and coverage of routine immunization across the district. Subsequently, the Government of Jharkhand adopted the concept and funds are now provided through the state budget for facilitating cross-learning visits.



Picture 1: Ms. Anita Baidya (ANM, CHC Jamtara) showing appropriate segregation of returned vaccine vials

“We started our journey by modifying our practices as per suggestions given by MCHIP technical officials and once we started liking it, we inculcated these practices in our habit and daily routine. These modifications made our work easy and led to improved quality of our performance....”

–Ms. Anita Baidya (ANM at CHC Jamtara)



“Due to cumulative efforts of our team at CHC Jamtara and MCHIP technical officials, we have gradually improved our processes and working pattern. We are proud of improved immunization practices and look forward to continue this process of improvement.”

–Dr. Sunil Kumar, Medical Officer In-Charge at CHC Jamtara