

Minutes of Meeting with States/UTs on COVID-19 Vaccination

4th May 2021, 6 pm onwards

A virtual meeting was held under the co-chairpersonship of Additional Secretary (H) and AS&MD (NHM) with State Health Officials of all States on 4th May 2021 at 6 pm, to discuss Grant-in aid from Foreign countries and COVID-19 vaccination. The list of participants is annexed.

Additional Secretary (H) briefed on the Grant-in aid where the states were informed of the rationale of allocation of resources. The provisions of the SOPs issued by MoHFW were explained in detail, including:

- Grant in aid is an additionality to what is already being provided by GOI and procured by the states themselves; and is an uncertain and limited quantity, therefore it has to be optimally utilized by allocating it to high burden states, those with other needs on account of geographical location, resource constraints etc. where the requirement for such equipment/medicines is more.
- Spreading such grant in aid thinly each time over a large number of states without any specific empirical criteria may not bring forth the desired results. It will also lead to small packages travelling large distances, high turnaround times and possible wastage of resources. Allocations are being done as and when information on Govt to Govt arrivals is received from MEA and for private arrivals from NITI Aayog.

The states were told that the allocation is being made to the state and thereafter the states will be responsible for identifying further allocation within the state based on their own assessments. The states should:

- ensure that there is seamless transition from transporters to the nodal officers and also ensure that all the items are put to immediate use without any delay.
- ensure that necessary arrangements are made at the receiving institution within the state, the place is kept ready, the technicians etc. are in readiness to make the equipment functional and all other preparatory actions are done before the materials reach.
- ensure pre-installation preparation in some cases such as PSA oxygen plants and other large equipment.
- convey to all institutions that these materials are gifts from other countries and are precious national resources being shared with us. All institutions must immediately receive the items, inventorize them and start utilizing them effectively and efficiently for patient care. Any delay or dereliction on this account should be viewed very seriously.

It was also highlighted that this is a precious national resource being shared by other countries and organizations, and we must acknowledge it and also share the usage of this equipment and items in the public domain, not only to assuage then people of the state that there is replenishment of equipment, but also keeping the donors informed that their donations are being used effectively. The details of all the nodal officers from states were also verified again from all the states in the meeting.

Following the discussion on Grant-in aid, AS&MD (NHM) provided a brief on the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination drive and reiterated the GoI guidelines on Liberalized Pricing & Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy, wherein 50% of the vaccine supplies from the manufacturer are

earmarked for 'Other than Government of India' channel which can be used by State/UT governments to vaccinate persons aged above 18 years, and Private Hospitals and Hospitals of Industrial establishments to vaccinate persons aged 18 years or above.

Next, through a PowerPoint presentation AS&MD (NHM) apprised the status of COVID-19 vaccination coverage across various beneficiary cohorts and vaccines supplies made to the States/UTs under GoI (for beneficiaries aged 45 years and above) and Other than GoI channel (18+ beneficiaries). The following points were stressed upon:

- States/UTs showing good & low performance were displayed across the prioritized age group and States/UTs were requested to make improvements where required.
- **Need to focus on 2nd dose of beneficiaries for full protection to the vaccinated individuals.**
- The doses likely to be available State/UT-wise for the 'Other than GoI' channel for the month of May 2021 has already been shared with states/UTs. The calculation is based on pro-rata basis against the 18-44 year population in the States/UTs.
- The situation will be assessed on 10th May 2021. If some States/UTs have not been able to obtain their doses, there will be no option but to offer these doses to other willing/high burden States/UTs.
- GoI supply for the first fortnight of May 2021 has also been shared with States/UTs, which is based on vaccination coverage in the last fortnight. Every tranche of GoI vaccine received should be used in 70:30 ratio for 2nd and 1st dose, respectively, so as to prioritize the 2nd dose among 45+ age group.

Additional Secretary (MA) re-emphasised on the huge gap between the 1st and 2nd dose of administered vaccine. He stressed that future allocation of GoI supply is linked to coverage performance, therefore, States/UTs need to give priority to 2nd dose and minimize vaccine wastage. Need for robust microplanning, for both government & private sector, was also stressed upon.

Additional Secretary (VS) briefed all on the provision in Co-WIN for the third phase of COVID vaccination drive. The key features include:

- Two separate sessions can be created at government CVCs, i.e. one for 18-44 years age group and other for 45+ age group. Also, separate sessions for different vaccines can be created at on the same day.
- It has been observed that in some districts the DIOs changed the CVC settings to reduce the age parameter to 18+. Some of the DIOs also published sessions for 18+ population whereas as per the information available with the Ministry, the concerned states were yet to procure the vaccines. This was checked from CoWIN backend and the information was shared with concerned states. The DIOs then had to cancel the sessions. To eliminate such errors –
 - A feature of OTP authentication has been put in place for eliminating data entry errors.
 - DIOs may be clearly instructed to publish sessions only as per the plan prepared by the State/UT based on availability of vaccine doses.
 - Facility for creating parallel sessions for different vaccine types is available. However, the same may be used with care.
 - The charge for vaccination has been set to more than zero by some DIOs for some CVCs. These should be reset to zero.

- For 18- 44 years group, only online appointment facility has been kept; no walk-in or on-site registration or appointment.
- States to organize further trainings for private sector on updated SOPs, wherever required.
- Private CVCs are to declare the vaccines and price of each vaccine on Co-WIN Portal. They can organize sessions for 18- 44 year as well as 45+ age group and must be 100% online registration & appointment.
- It is strongly advised to not cancel sessions frequently. Appropriate age group and vaccine batch must be entered for the sessions (i.e. vaccine batch under GoI supplies should be used for sessions for 45+ years group only).
- So as to prioritize 2nd dose, 70% of the session capacity (or even more) may be reserved for 2nd dose.
- If 45 plus session is also completely booked, then the session capacity may be suitably increased by the DIO before start of session to augment the number of reserved slots.
- Vaccinator should be sensitized to not re-register the beneficiary coming for 2nd dose as it may lead to data errors in the certificate.
- Reinforce the role and training of vaccinators. Some resource person may be identified within the vaccinators and peer groups may be created
- States/UTs need to ensure that all private CVCs return the balance vaccine doses which was supplied to them by GoI before 30th April 2021.
- States/UTs are to encourage Aadhaar authentication to avoid duplication and misuse.
- The vaccination team should ask for appointment slip for 18- 44 year cohort. There should be clear display of – “No on-site and walk-ins” at the vaccination centre. A 4-digit code for authentication will be soon implemented who have booked online, to prevent impersonation,

Subsequently, States/UTs provided an update on the following four items: 1) status of payment against the invoice for vaccine supply under Other than GoI channel, 2) for 18+ age group, whether vaccination will be charged or free of cost at govt. CVCs, 3) strategy for improving 2nd dose coverage, 4) clarifications regarding Co-WIN portal.

1. Regarding the payment to the manufacturers against the invoice, many States/UTs *had made the payment* to the vaccine manufacturers against the invoice received for vaccine doses under the ‘other than GoI channel’. The States/UTs that reported *to make the payment* to the vaccine manufacturers by tomorrow (5th May 2021) include Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, West Bengal; Covaxin specific- Delhi, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tripura; Covishield specific- Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Lakshadweep, Manipur, Odisha, Puducherry.
2. All States/UTs have decided to provide the COVID-19 vaccine free of cost to the 18-44 years age group except Sikkim which plans to keep it free of cost only for people in State voting list and Mizoram where discussion is pending.
3. All States/UTs reported undertaking efforts to increase the coverage of 2nd dose vaccination among the due beneficiaries by increasing outreach & IEC activities, review meetings etc.
4. Co-WIN related discussion:
 - Responding to a query from Andhra Pradesh regarding inclusion of Journalists and Bankers among Front Line Workers (FLWs), AS&MD (NHM) clarified that no such decision has been taken w.r.t the inclusion of these categories. In the new Liberalized Pricing & Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy, all persons above 18 years are eligible.

- Meghalaya requested for access to district-wise number of beneficiaries (18-44 years age group) registered on CoWIN for planning of vaccination centres as per demand. Additional Secretary (VS) clarified that such lists may not be available as CoWIN does not record the address of the beneficiaries. He further mentioned that the inclusion of utilities such as enabling the beneficiaries to choose the preferred location for vaccination centre, sending notifications on availability of slots, advance booking options are under consideration.
- Kerala suggested that appointment should be completely online for 2nd dose. State also suggested for provision of some alert mechanism for CVC in-charge near the due date for 2nd dose as per the vaccine to aid timely scheduling of sessions.
- Odisha reported that Co-WIN is providing the appointment time to all beneficiaries in the first hour of the entire 4 hours session slot, leading to overcrowding/difficulties at session sites. State requested to look into its resolution.
- West Bengal, Delhi and Karnataka raised their concern that if the beneficiary due for the second dose comes at the 56th/57th day for vaccine administration, the name of the beneficiary is not shown on CoWIN. States suggested even distribution of beneficiaries across the 4 time intervals for each session. Currently, there are large number of beneficiaries booking the same slot with same time interval which is leading to overcrowding.
- Punjab requested for provision for sub-categories among 18- 44 years age group in Co-WIN (persons with comorbidities and high risk profile identified by state expert group). It was clarified that such eligibility can only be verified at State/session level and any IT feature over and above that in the existing Co-WIN portal cannot be enabled.
- UP requested that for 18-44 year cohort, last one hour may be kept for on-spot registration so as to optimally utilize the vaccine and reduce vaccine wastage. It was clarified that this has been deliberated upon at MoHFW and was not provisioned to prevent misuse of vaccine. Additionally, the emphasis should be on adequate IEC & behaviour change communication emphasizing that every vaccine dose is precious and beneficiaries are requested to cooperate towards optimal vaccine utilization.
- Additional Secretary (VS) assured all states/UTs that the concerns highlighted by the States/UTs will be expeditiously examined and resolved. New features will also be incorporated, wherever feasible.

Additional Secretary (MA) advised the States/UTs to segregate the beneficiaries due for 2nd dose according to the type of vaccine and due date for 2nd dose administration for better planning.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks to the Chairs.

List of Participants:

1. Ms Arti Ahuja, Additional Secretary (H), MoHFW
2. Ms Vandana Gurnani, AS&MD (NHM), MoHFW
3. Dr Manohar Agnani, Additional Secretary (MA), MoHFW
4. Sh Vikas Sheel, Additional Secretary (VS), MoHFW
5. Sh Vipin Kumar, Joint Secretary M/o Education
6. Sh Subodh Yadav, Joint Secretary, M/o Jal Shakti
7. Additional Chief Secretary/ Secretary/ Principal Secretary (Health)- All States/UTs
8. Mission Director (NHM)- All States/UTs
9. State Immunization Officer- All States/UTs
10. Dr Pradeep Halder, Advisor (RCH), MoHFW
11. Dr MK Aggarwal, Addl Commissioner (UIP), MoHFW
12. Dr Veena Dhawan, Joint Commissioner (Imm), MoHFW
13. Dr Indu Grewal, CMO (SAG), MoHFW
14. Dr Suhas Dandore, Deputy Director, MoHFW
15. Members of COVID-19 Vaccine Cell