International Post Corporation

DHL white paper update reveals learnings from one year into COVID-19

18-05-2021

The recently published DHL white paper on "Revisiting Pandemic Resilience" takes one step back and sheds light into what the sector has learned from the race against COVID-19.

It has been more than a year since the world woke up to the news of the new SARS-COV-2 virus. What followed was the largest global health crisis in 100 years. The disruptions to every aspect of society have been profound. Logistics and supply chain management have played a vital role in pandemic management right from the start to ensure the availability and distribution of key pandemic management tools: medicines and medical supplies, such as vaccines, test kits, ancillary supplies, treatments, and personal protective equipment (PPE). With over 200 million doses of all approved vaccines distributed to over 120 countries and 9,000 operated flights in which more than 350 DHL facilities were involved, DHL was part of the response strategy from the beginning. Over 50 bilateral and multilateral collaborations with partners in both the pharma and public sector and several new dedicated services were created to stem this task. The recently published DHL white paper on "Revisiting Pandemic Resilience" takes one step back and sheds light into what the sector has learned from the race against COVID-19 to be best prepared to handle public health emergencies in the future.

"Logistics and supply chain management play a key role in pandemic management. Keeping supply chains running and ensuring delivery for essential health supplies provided valuable lessons", explains Katja Busch, Chief Commercial Officer DHL. "We rolled out new dedicated services for the vaccine distribution at unprecedented speed. All sectors, industries, and nations must work together to successfully end the acute phase of this pandemic. Forming strong partnerships and leveraging data analytics will be key. We also need to remain prepared for high patient and vaccine volumes, maintain logistics infrastructure and capacity, while planning for seasonal fluctuations by providing a stable and well-equipped platform for the years to come."

There are important achievements across research and development, production, and supply chain management as well as policy that will help us get through the crisis as a global community. The foundation of this was

laid by research and development by developing a vaccine five times faster than any other vaccine in history and ramping up production in record time - quadrupling pre-COVID vaccine production capacities. Together with logistics and supply chain, they were able to get the life-saving vaccines to patients worldwide. Although unprecedented cold chain requirements of up to -70°C had to be met, logistics were able to roll out the distribution three times faster than usual. Furthermore, multilateral action by public health and policy actors has provided a conducive framework for rapid vaccine development and deployment.

Collaboration key to global vaccine distribution

For high levels of immunization, around 10 billion vaccine doses are required globally by end of 2021. However, only four countries have achieved vaccination rates >50% to date and many of the remaining countries and territories have less-developed infrastructure, making the rollout more difficult. To speed up vaccine distribution, the following areas need to be looked at:

- Industries and nations must foster collaboration, paying special attention to building strong partnerships and a supportive data backbone.
- For safe inbound supply flows, proactive transport-capacity management and sustainable return flows for packaging are needed. This is particularly critical as more than 95% of global COVID-19 vaccine doses are produced in just eight countries and need to be delivered worldwide.
- Also locally tailored last-mile, ground distribution models should be put into place with a focus on strategic location of warehouses, the synchronization of vaccines and ancillaries flow as well as the number and location of vaccination points.

The set-up logistics infrastructure and capacity should be kept on that level as in the coming years further 7-9 billion doses of vaccines are necessary annually to keep (re-)infection rates low and slow down the pace of virus mutations - seasonal fluctuations not counted.

Planning for the future

Planning for the future it is essential to identify and prevent health crises early through active partnerships, expanded global warning systems, an integrated epidemic-preventions agenda and targeted R&D investments. It is also recommended to expand and institutionalize virus containment and countermeasures (e. g. digital contact tracing and national stockpiles) to ensure strategic preparedness and more efficient response times. To facilitate a speedy rollout of medication (i. e. diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines), governments and industries should employ "ever-warm" manufacturing capacity, blueprint research, production, and

CLASSIFICATION: CORPORATE | WWW.IPC.BE © 2026

procurement plans, as well as expand local deployment capabilities.

To read the complete white paper, please click on the following link.

Source: Deutsche Post DHL Group

CLASSIFICATION: CORPORATE | WWW.IPC.BE © 2026