



# Universal Health Care and Vaccine Distribution

**G**etting needles into arms is the critical last lap in the race to beat COVID-19. Developed countries with the technology and infrastructure to accelerate vaccine production take a strong lead at the start, but some have lost ground during distribution.

Richa Sahay, community curator, Future of Mobility, World Economic Forum, asserts that countries that have universal health care (UHC) systems and digital infrastructure at the national level show the highest national vaccination rates. On the other hand, countries with privatized systems that vary region by region, or provider by provider, may experience inconsistent communication and inefficient platforms for information, which can lead to vaccine waste.

Take a look at Israel: An article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* tied that nation’s vaccine distribution success—nearly a third of the eligible population inoculated by mid-January 2021—to its universal insurance

coverage and central, fully integrated digital system, which allows for data-based patient prioritization and real-time communication.

Similarly, the National Health Service in the U.K. communicated and executed a UHC strategy to prioritize vaccinations for people 50 and older. At the end of April, the BBC reported that 98% of this group in Scotland, 95% in England, 92% in Wales and 89% in Northern Ireland had received their first shot.

“The prioritization will become more heterogeneous and complex as the general groups get in line,” Ms. Sahay told *Forbes*. “This increases the need for a central, data-based prioritization strategy and will almost inevitably result in more complexity for logistics players who will face last-minute changes on demand and routing.”

Regardless of the type of health care system in place, clear and consistent messaging and reliable communications technologies are keys to achieving public health. **IQ**

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## NIMBLE COMPANIES FIND PANDEMIC-RELATED OPPORTUNITIES

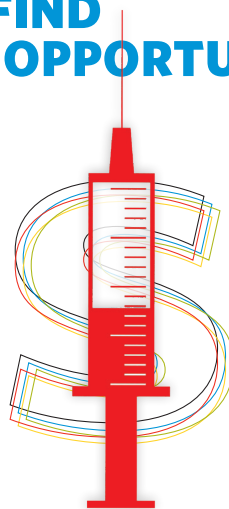
South Korea’s Poonglim Pharmatech got popular fast when demand for its low dead space (LDS) syringe suddenly spiked. The LDS minimizes how much of the vaccine remains in the syringe after injection, allowing six doses per vial instead of five.

The only problem? Poonglim was a small business. But because their syringe was the easiest LDS model to make, they received support from

the government and from South Korea’s Samsung to ramp up production.

Company **VP Cho Mi-heui** told Reuters that Samsung helped them refit production lines, facilitated talks with Pfizer and guided them through regulatory procedures.

Poonglim has grown its workforce fivefold and vastly expanded capacity. And because the syringes work so well, Pfizer/BioNTech nearly doubled



the projected number of COVID-19 vaccine doses they could provide globally.

During the pandemic, companies nimble enough to scale operations to meet the needs of the moment found opportunities to maintain (or even boost) business as many struggled to stay afloat.

Lockdowns led to a surge in online shopping. Quick-thinking transportation companies deployed continuity plans that

ensured optimal service while prioritizing customer and employee health.

**Lesson learned:**

A flexible strategy, innovative thinking and digital-ready infrastructure can put any company ahead—even during a global crisis. And having the most efficient manufacturing processes possible not only speeds production, but it can make your company the most attractive to outside support. **IQ**