

BENEFITS OF INTERCOUNTRY CO-ORDINATION

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Intercountry co-ordination has been possible, necessary and practical since the beginning of this Smallpox Eradication/Measles Control Programme. It has often been stimulated and certainly facilitated by the technical advisers working in the programme. This is true in the case of Ghana, Togo and Dahomey because for most of the time since the programme began, we have shared a medical epidemiologist, whose travels have allowed him to keep abreast of the situations and needs in each of the three countries.

Three types of co-ordination in particular should be noted: (1) commodity transfer, (2) border area vaccination campaigns, (3) notification of border area epidemics.

Transfer of various commodities among the three countries has been a common occurrence. Obviously we enjoy a particular advantage in that the distances between the three capital cities are not great and supplies can be sent from one to another easily and on short notice. Had it not been possible to transfer vehicle parts from one country to another, programme activities would have been hampered and nearly interrupted at certain times in Togo. Had it not been possible to transfer vaccine from one country to another, there would have been instances when vaccination activities would have been temporarily suspended.

Successful border area vaccination campaigns have been concurrently conducted along the Dahomey-Togo border in one instance, and along the Togo-Ghana border area in another instance. Both of these campaigns were preceded by planning meetings between programme personnel from the respective countries.

The usefulness and desirability of immediate intercountry notification of smallpox cases, particularly those occurring along the borders and those found to be importations from a neighbouring state, have been discussed. It was decided that this practice should be undertaken but that it could be done most easily and quickly on an informal basis by the advisory personnel in order to avoid the delays engendered by communicating through conventional official channels.

To date, most intercountry co-ordination has been carried out unofficially. Obviously, however, an official system which was similarly rapid and efficient needs to be established.

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