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Latin America is Again Pursuing Copy-Paste Policies for Vaccine Strategies

Over the last few decades, Latin America has followed the lead of the European Union (EU) on policy goals related to renewable energy, plastics, emissions, and waste management. However, goals that are well within reach of developed countries, are much less attainable for developing countries due to the lack of infrastructure and institutions needed to support higher standards. This is the art of the “Copy-Paste” policy, and it’s happening again with COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in Latin America.

Latin America is using the same “best practices” for vaccination campaigns and roll-out strategies as the developed world. The only problem is that these strategies are not tailored to guarantee success in the region, and over the last six months it has become clear that they are not working. According to [Our World in Data](#), only about 10% of Latin Americans have been fully vaccinated (two shots) compared to nearly 30% of those in Europe and the United Kingdom. There is no one-size-fits-all for COVID-19, and Latin America must look domestically, not internationally, to create the best solution to reactivate economies and recover from this crisis. With the help of the private sector and effective communications strategies, Latin America’s governments can successfully roll out vaccine campaigns faster without risking quality.

Disparities Call for Tailored Plans

Proper communications strategies are needed to set expectations. Many Latin American countries lack the funds to directly purchase vaccines, the infrastructure and logistical expertise to successfully distribute and administer vaccines, and face an altogether different labor force make up, which significantly impact who is vaccinated first. These differences require unique timelines for vaccine distribution and administration.

A number of countries, including many Central American countries, have been unable to directly negotiate with pharmaceutical companies offering a COVID-19 vaccine, so they are relying on less expensive, international vaccine sharing mechanisms to provide them with doses. However, these mechanisms create complex distribution scenarios which have already caused delays due to manufacturing slowdowns and supply chain inefficiencies. Vaccine sharing mechanisms also do not account for potential domestic roadblocks to access, allowing for further delays in availability. Infrastructure and underfunded health systems are also making it challenging for Latin America to implement policies copied from the developed world. Even more advanced Latin American countries, like Colombia and Mexico, lack the needed infrastructure and are being forced to import heavy duty freezers to safely transport and store vaccines. These challenges make communicating realistic timelines even more important for Latin American governments and, ultimately, the companies that do business in the region.

However, there is a solution. By partnering with the private sector and creating better communication strategies, Latin America's governments can vaccinate more people more quickly. Businesses are already asking to take part in this type of collaboration. Companies in Brazil and Colombia are working to gain approval to unilaterally negotiate with pharmaceutical companies and vaccinate their workers. With a private sector partner, governments can fast track inefficiencies that have created roadblocks in the past and are slowing down vaccine rollouts. Faster roll outs will lead to quicker economic reactivation and recovery across Latin America.

However, these authorizations must be accessible for companies. Brazil and Colombia have already legalized private vaccination but have created so many contingencies that it dissuades companies from pursuing vaccination. In Colombia, private entities can only buy vaccines endorsed by the Ministry of Health ministry and must guarantee private logistics chains. Additionally conditions, like the requirement that doses must first be offered to those in vulnerable groups, are further limiting the types of private entities that can contribute to the vaccination plan. Meanwhile in Brazil, current policy

requires that all privately acquired doses be donated to the government until it finishes vaccinating priority groups. Furthermore, pharmaceuticals are prioritizing negotiations with governments, raising additional barriers to entry for private entities.

Instead of supporting policies with extraneous contingencies, policymakers must instead pursue informed legislation that is tailored to fit unique country situations. This will ensure that vaccines will quickly get to those in need.

Roll-Out Plans

The adoption of European-style COVID-19 vaccine roll-out plans are overly ambitious and could impact businesses and consumers throughout Latin America without the proper communications programs to match. Roll-out plans in Latin America currently use frameworks set up by developed countries, with healthcare and other essential workers vaccinated first, followed by the elderly and other vulnerable groups. However, Latin America's distinct workforce makeup, makes it imperative to begin vaccinating younger workers before the elderly and other "vulnerable" groups so that the region has the ability to focus on economic reactivation.

Delays and overall sluggish nature of vaccination means that countries like Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico won't begin vaccinating their working age populations until the third or fourth quarters of 2021. The failure to realize the importance of vaccinating labor force populations first is weighing further on economic reactivation. Without accelerated vaccination campaigns, contagion centers, like those seen in Brazil, Argentina, and Panama, will continue to occur, allowing the virus to mutate into additional variants. This is where private businesses can step in and avoid these dire scenarios.

Communications plans around who will be vaccinated first and why have the power to properly set expectations for citizens and allow return-to-work plans to be set up responsibly. Proper planning and communication will also allow Latin America to target truly vulnerable groups, like the younger workforce population, that will allow for quicker economic recovery. Partnerships with the private

sector to help rollout plans move more efficiently and effectively will further these goals and will allow the government to focus on informal sector workers and other populations.

Effective Communications Strategies

Effective communication plans, like those used in other crisis situations, and collaboration between businesses and governments are imperative for companies to quickly and effectively ensure that employees are informed about the ongoing situation and get them access to much needed vaccines. Private business development and operations are heavily dependent on policies established by central governments and they need clear leadership that establishes an effective and successful pathway forward. With governments already behind on vaccination, communications and expectation setting are even more important, but partnerships with the private sector, which has the resources and the capabilities to roll out vaccination campaigns more quickly, will prove to be pertinent to successful recovery in Latin America.

Latin America is receiving fewer COVID-19 vaccines for their population sizes compared to developed countries, and shipments continue to be delayed. These unintended roadblocks are compounded by the inability of Latin American countries to purchase more vaccines due to lack of funds, meaning that when vaccines are delayed or are never received, the impact is more severe. Even though some Latin American countries have been able to negotiate directly with pharmaceutical companies, many are still relying on shared vaccine mechanisms presenting a heightened risk for delays due to production or transportation bottlenecks.

Copy-paste policies are not helping Latin America. The region must create COVID-19 vaccination plans and timelines that are realistic for them, not for developed countries. Better communications planning and expectation setting can help not only governments, but also the businesses that exist in the region to thrive as Latin America recovers from the pandemic. Creating partnerships between governments and the private sector will also support getting more people vaccinated faster to economic recovery can begin.

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JORGE DEL CASTILLO

Managing Director, Strategic Communications
Jorge.DelCastillo@fticonsulting.com

JUAN VIANA

Director, Strategic Communications
Juan.Viana@fticonsulting.com

EMILY NEWTOWN

Strategic Communications
Emilie.Newton@fticonsulting.com

ANDREA DE LA TORRE

Strategic Communications
Andrea.delatorre@fticonsulting.com