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Equitable vaccine delivery plan needs more support to succeed: COVAX partners



© UNICEF/Dhiraj Singh | The AstraZeneca/Oxford COVID-19 vaccine is being manufactured under licence in India.

2 March 2021 | [Health \(/en/news/topic/health\)](#)



The equitable coronavirus vaccine delivery initiative COVAX (<https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator/covax>) that has delivered its first doses to West Africa and Latin America in the past few days, is a credit to international solidarity, but potential obstacles must be overcome if a fully global rollout is to be achieved, UN health agency chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Tuesday.

Speaking after Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Colombia received their first round of AstraZeneca(AZ)/Oxford jabs, the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO (<http://www.who.int/en/>)) said that the distribution of vaccines "has not been as equitable as we would have liked, but it has certainly been more equitable than it would have been otherwise".

Challenges on the ground

The COVAX (<https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator/covax>) collective planned to deliver 11 million doses this week, Tedros continued, before cautioning that that "we still have many challenges to overcome, including the local production barriers relating to intellectual

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property”.

The WHO chief also noted that although vaccines were a powerful weapon against COVID-19 (<https://www.un.org/coronavirus>) , “they are not the only tool. Countries must continue using all the tools at their disposal including diagnostics, therapeutics and the full range of proven public health measures.”

COVAX partners the WHO, GAVI (<https://www.gavi.org/covid19/covax-facility>) the Vaccine Alliance and CEPI (<https://cepi.net/>), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, aim to deliver just under two billion vaccines to around 190 countries and territories.

Record vaccines

Although as multiple safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines have been developed at “record pace”, and manufacturing scaled up to produce hundreds of millions of doses, CEPI Chief Executive Officer Dr Richard Hatchett noted that emerging variants risked complicating the task of ending the pandemic.

“This is a moment for celebration and we must remain firmly focused on delivering equitable access if we are to stop the endless cycle of lockdowns”, he insisted.

‘Job is not done’

“But the job is not done when it comes to developing vaccines against COVID-19; in parallel in the global rollout of vaccines, we must now redouble our R&D efforts to tackle the emerging variants of COVID-19.”

Up to the end of May, 237 million doses have been allocated to 142 participant countries in the COVAX scheme, it said in a statement (<https://www.gavi.org/sites/default/files/covid/covax/COVAX-First-round-allocation-of-AZ-and-SII.pdf>).

These include Afghanistan, which has been allocated 2.6 million vaccines, Algeria (1.9 million), Bangladesh (10.9 million), Brazil (9.1 million), Indonesia (11.7 million) and North Korea (1.7 million).

When countries can expect to receive their quotas will be made clear at the end of the week, as this is dependent on factors including national regulatory requirements, the availability of supply and other criteria such as whether national deployment and vaccination plans have been approved.

In addition to this first round of allocations, an exceptional distribution of 1.2 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was previously announced for delivery by the end of March.

Funding call

In the coming weeks and months, GAVI chief Seth Berkley said that the COVAX scheme would be hoping to get further funding to purchase even more vaccines for low and middle-income countries, with funding potentially secured for 1.8 billion doses this year.



Tedros Adhanom  
@DrTedros

Countries are not in a race with each other, this is a common race against the #COVID19 virus. @WHO and our COVAX partners will continue to work day & night towards our #VaccinEquity vision in every country within the first 100 days of this year. There are now 39 days left.

7:51 AM · Mar 2, 2021 

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Progress made on the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine also promised to boost the COVAX initiative, following its emergency use authorization in the United States and agreement to provide 500 million doses, Dr Berkley continued, while efforts were also continuing to secure a future purchase agreement with Novovax for 1.1 billion doses.

World Health Organization and UN agencies here.
(<https://www.un.org/coronavirus>)

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“It can’t be emphasized enough that we are attempting our largest and most complex vaccine rollout in history....we need to keep working to ensure the training, infrastructure and every other critical ingredient is in place to make every dose count with the goal of helping every country in the acute phase of the pandemic as soon as possible.”

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(</en/story/2021/03/1086062>)

‘We sink or we swim together’: 5 things you need to know about COVAX (</en/story/2021/03/1086062>)

1 March 2021 | [Health \(/en/news/topic/health\)](/en/news/topic/health)

COVAX has been trending in stories about the COVID-19 pandemic in recent days, particularly in relation to the shipment of vaccines to Ghana (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/02/1085572>) and Côte d'Ivoire, the first to arrive in Africa. Here's a UN News recap of what COVAX is, and why it is so important.



(</en/story/2021/03/1086022>)

COVID-19 cases rise for first time in seven weeks: WHO (</en/story/2021/03/1086022>)

1 March 2021 | [Health \(/en/news/topic/health\)](/en/news/topic/health)

After six consecutive weeks of decline, COVID-19 cases worldwide increased last week for the first time, the World Health Organization (WHO (<https://www.who.int/>)) said on Monday.