

COVAX

Lesotho receives its first shipment of the COVID-19 Vaccine

Statement by UNICEF and WHO on the arrival of the first Covid-19 vaccines in Lesotho

Maseru, 3 March 2021 – After a year of disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with more than 10,000 Basotho infected with the virus, almost 300 lives lost, and hundreds of thousands of Basotho families affected in countless ways, the path to recovery for Lesotho can now begin with the arrival of a vaccine for COVID-19.

The deliveries mark the beginning of what will be the largest, most complex global roll-out of vaccines in history. The COVAX Facility plans to deliver at least 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of this year. This is an unprecedented global effort to make sure all citizens have access to vaccines.

“This is a momentous occasion,” said Dr. Richard Banda, WHO Representative for Lesotho. “COVID-19 has taken a toll on countries around the world and Lesotho is no exception. We know this is the first step and we congratulate the Government of Lesotho, especially the Ministry of Health for its tireless efforts to protect Basotho and contain the spread of the virus.

Lesotho will today receive 36, 000 vaccines as part of an initial tranche of deliveries of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine licensed to the Serum Institute of India, which represents part of the first wave of COVID-19 vaccines headed to several low and middle-income countries.

“We know the only way out of this crisis is to ensure that vaccinations are available for all,” Anurita Bains, UNICEF Representative for Lesotho and acting UN Resident Coordinator. “It’s a historic day for the country and as the UN we stand ready to support the successful roll-out of the vaccine programme.”

The shipment today is the first tranche of many that will be allocated to Lesotho in the coming months and year through the COVAX Facility, which is working to accelerate the development of and access to COVID-19 vaccines. The facility is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO) working in partnership with UNICEF as well as the World Bank, manufacturers, civil society organizations, and others.

We also acknowledge the immense contributions to the COVAX Facility from key partners who are also supporting the Kingdom of Lesotho, including –

- The **US Government** recently contributed \$2 billion to the COVAX facility. As the largest donor to COVAX, the US government is committed to supporting the international COVID-19 response, which is critical to ending this pandemic. “Over the last year, the United States government has moved swiftly to support the local response to control the spread of COVID-19,” said US Ambassador Rebecca Gonzales. “We will continue to

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support the vaccine rollout with trusted implementing partners and the Ministry of Health.”

- The **European Union** has made €1 billion contribution to the COVAX Facility. The EU and its Member States have been one of the lead contributors to COVAX with over €2.2 billion. Through these contributions, the European Union and its partners have secured purchase options for COVID-19 vaccines for all the participants in the COVAX Facility. “The EU is committed to ensuring that everyone who needs a vaccine gets it,” said EU Ambassador to Lesotho Christian Manahl. “Because we will only be safe if the whole world is safe. We are in a race against the virus and COVAX is our best hope that all our partners, in Africa and elsewhere, have access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines.”
- The **UK Government** is proud to be one of the biggest donors to COVAX, helping to secure over one billion doses for vulnerable populations around the world. The UK has contributed £548 million (or over \$765-million) to the COVAX facility. “The UK is delighted to see vaccines arriving “on the ground” in Lesotho, said British High Commissioner to Lesotho, Anne Macro. “This is a testament to the hard work of the Lesotho Government, Ministry of Health, and its partners in the UN and NGO sector in undertaking all the necessary advance preparation.”

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What is COVAX?

COVAX is co-led by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), working in partnership with UNICEF as well as the World Bank, civil society organizations, manufacturers, and others. COVAX is part of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, a ground-breaking global collaboration to accelerate development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines.

COVAX has built a diverse portfolio of vaccines suitable for a range of settings and populations, and is on track to meet its goal of delivering at least 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to participating countries around the globe by the end of 2021, including at least 1.3 billion donor-funded doses to the 92 lower-income COVAX Facility participants supported by the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC).



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For several months, COVAX partners have been supporting governments and partners in readiness efforts, in preparation for this moment. They have been especially active in working with some of the world's poorest countries: those that will benefit from the Advance Market Commitment (AMC), an innovative financial mechanism to help secure global and equitable access for COVID-19 vaccines. This includes assisting with the development of national vaccination plans, support for cold chain infrastructure, as well as stockpiling of half a billion syringes and safety boxes for their disposal, masks, gloves and other equipment to ensure that there is enough equipment for health workers to start vaccinating priority groups as soon as possible.