

# COVAX



CEPI



**COVID-19 vaccines shipped by COVAX arrive in Sierra Leone**  
**Embargoed until: 22:00 (Freetown/GMT +0), Monday 8 March 2021**

**Freetown, Sierra Leone, Monday 8 March 2021** - Today, Sierra Leone received the first batch of 96,000 doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford COVID-19 vaccine shipped via the COVAX Facility, a partnership between the Government Sierra Leone, CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO. This is a historic step towards our goal to ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally, in what will be the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history. The delivery is part of a first wave of arrivals of an initial 528,000 doses that will continue till end of May 2021.

On 6 March 2021, COVAX shipped 96,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, licensed and manufactured by Serum Institute (PVT) Limited from Maharashtra, India, to Freetown, Sierra Leone, arriving in the evening of 8 March 2021. The arrival of this first batch of 528,000 doses will kick start the vaccination of 20% of Sierra Leone's 8,000,000 population as part of the COVAX Facility in its unprecedented effort to deliver at least 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2021. This initial consignment of the vaccine and the immediate subsequent shipments will prioritise critical target groups such as frontline health professionals, vulnerable including the aged people and people with underlying health conditions.

"Throughout 2020, our health facilities have been faced with the task of responding to the pandemic, while at the same time, working to sustain the regular essential services including providing maternal and child health services," said Dr Austin Hinga Demby, Minister of Health and Sanitation. "The lifesaving vaccines which are now available for COVID-19, combined with the other important measures which we have adopted since the pandemic started, will afford us a good prospect to return to normalcy and to fulfil our obligations under the Universal Health Coverage programme."

"We are delighted Sierra Leone has today received its first COVAX vaccine doses and we look forward to the launch of the vaccination campaign in the coming days. Thanks to the work of the Government of Sierra Leone and of the COVAX partners, and with the support of our donors, we have been delivering on our promise to begin vaccinating vulnerable populations around the world delivering over 10 million doses to our participating economies in the last 10 days," said Charlie Wetham, Regional Head, Asia Pacific and Anglophone Africa at of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

"The arrival of this first batch of Covid-19 vaccines in Sierra Leone under the COVAX Facility is testimony to the power of global solidarity in response to a global health and development crisis. Strong international solidarity is similarly required to address other pressing global challenges such as the climate crisis that threatens the world's quest for sustainable development," said Mr Babatunde Ahonsi, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Sierra Leone.

"Sierra Leone is at a turning point in the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic as the country has now joined a growing number of other countries taking one of the most important actions to safeguard lives against COVID-19 through vaccination," said Dr Steven Velabo Shongwe, WHO Country Representative. "Deployment of the COVID vaccine should be seen as one of the critical measures that have to be taken in addition to the strict adherence to other public health measures such

as the correct use of facemask, handwashing and social distancing. I wish to thank all the collaborating partners that are supporting this vision of equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines to reach the most vulnerable in Sierra Leone and the rest of the world."

"This is indeed a momentous occasion, which is a culmination of various efforts led by the Government of Sierra Leone to ensure that this pandemic is brought under control," said UNICEF Representative, Dr. Suleiman Braimoh. "UNICEF strongly believes that vaccinations are cost-effective ways to reduce the disease burden in a country, save lives. As more people get vaccinated, the faster it will be for us to see a gradual return to normalcy and to better access to health, education and protection services for every child and their families."

Development and technical partners, including the European Union, Government of Japan, UK Government, the US Government and World Bank, are supporting the deployment and roll out plans of the vaccines in Sierra Leone. The vaccination will begin mid-March and will be rolled out in a phased approach. Health workers and people over 70 years of age being targeted first, while the second phase will include other essential workers such as military, police personnel, and teachers/university lecturers.

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.

In order for doses to be delivered to COVAX Facility participants via this first allocation round, several critical pieces must be in place, including confirmation of national regulatory authorisation criteria related to the vaccines delivered, indemnification agreements, national vaccination plans from AMC participants, as well as other logistical factors such as export and import licenses.

As participants fulfil the above criteria and finalise readiness preparations, COVAX will issue purchase orders to the manufacturer and ship and deliver doses via an iterative process. This means deliveries for the first round of allocation will take place on a rolling basis and in tranches.

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 organisations, 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 vaccine to participating countries around the globe in 2021, including at least 1.3 billion donor-funded doses to the 92 lower-income COVAX Facility participants supported by the Gavi COVAX AMC.

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## Quotes from partners and donors

*Since the beginning of this pandemic, vaccine makers have spared no efforts to speed up development, production, registration, and equitable access to of high-quality vaccines. Pharmaceutical manufacturers are committed founding partners of the ACT Accelerator and COVAX, and we are excited that for the first time in the history of pandemics, vaccines are rolled out in a coordinated manner quickly around the world. Another momentous effort is the scaling up of the vaccine manufacturing from zero to millions in a matter of months. As producing vaccines is a complex process, so with such a scale up, there are inevitably going to be challenges ahead; we will continue working collaboratively to find solutions and join hands in making history.*

**Thomas Cueni, Director General, International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations (IFPMA)**

[www.ifpma.org](http://www.ifpma.org)

*“Developing Countries Vaccine Manufacturer’s Network (DCVMN) has strongly stood with all stakeholders during this unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic and has strived hard to develop, manufacture and roll out COVID-19 vaccines in a record time span of 10-12 months as a part of global collaboration and solidarity. We stand together shoulder to shoulder in this endeavour”*

**Sai D. Prasad, President, Developing Countries Vaccine Manufacturer’s Network (DCVMN) [www.dcvmn.org](http://www.dcvmn.org)**

## Notes to Editors

List of donor pledges to the Gavi COVAX AMC is available [here](#).

Interactive funding tracker for the ACT Accelerator, which includes details of funding for COVAX, can be found [here](#).

## About COVAX

COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the [Access to COVID-19 Tools \(ACT\) Accelerator](#), is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) and the World Health Organization (WHO) – working in partnership with developed and developing country vaccine manufacturers, UNICEF, the World Bank, and others. It is the only global initiative that is working with governments and manufacturers to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are available worldwide to both higher-income and lower-income countries.

CEPI is focused on the [COVAX vaccine research and development portfolio](#): investing in R&D across a variety of promising candidates, with the goal to support development of three safe and effective vaccines which can be made available to countries participating in the COVAX Facility. As part of this work, CEPI has secured first right of refusal to potentially over one billion doses for the COVAX Facility to a number of candidates, and made strategic investments in vaccine manufacturing, which includes reserving capacity to manufacture doses of COVAX vaccines at a network of facilities, and securing glass vials to hold 2 billion doses of vaccine. CEPI is also investing in the ‘next generation’ of vaccine candidates, which will give the world additional options to control COVID-19 in the future.

Gavi is focused on procurement and delivery for COVAX: coordinating the design, implementation and administration of the [COVAX Facility](#) and the Gavi [COVAX AMC](#) and working with its Alliance partners UNICEF and WHO, along with governments, on country readiness and delivery. The COVAX Facility is the global pooled procurement mechanism for COVID-19 vaccines through which COVAX will ensure fair and equitable access to vaccines for all 190 participating economies, using an allocation framework formulated by WHO. The COVAX Facility will do this by pooling buying power from participating economies and providing volume guarantees across a range of promising vaccine candidates. The Gavi COVAX AMC is the financing mechanism that will support the participation of 92 low- and middle-income countries in the Facility, enabling access to donor-funded doses of safe and effective vaccines. Gavi is fundraising for the COVAX AMC, and funding UNICEF procurement of vaccines as well as partners’ and governments work on readiness and delivery, including support cold chain equipment, technical assistance, syringes, vehicles, and other aspects of the vastly complex logistical operation for delivery. UNICEF and the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO) will be acting as procurement coordinators for the COVAX Facility, helping deliver vaccines to COVAX AMC participants and others.

WHO has multiple roles within [COVAX](#): It provides normative guidance on vaccine policy, regulation, safety, R&D, allocation, and country readiness and delivery. Its Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization develops evidence-based immunization policy recommendations. Its Emergency Use Listing (EUL)/prequalification programmes ensure harmonized review and authorization across member states. It provides global coordination and member state support on vaccine safety monitoring. It developed the target product profiles for COVID-19 vaccines and provides R&D technical coordination. WHO leads, along with UNICEF, the support to countries as they prepare

to receive and administer vaccines. The [Country Readiness and Delivery](#) (CRD) workstream includes Gavi and numerous other partners working at the global, regional, and country-level to provide tools, guidance, monitoring, and on the ground technical assistance for the planning and roll-out of the [vaccines](#). Along with COVAX partners, WHO is also developing a no-fault compensation scheme as part of the time-limited indemnification and liability commitments.

UNICEF is leveraging its experience as the largest single vaccine buyer in the world and working with manufacturers and partners on the procurement of COVID-19 vaccine doses, as well as freight, logistics and storage. UNICEF already procures more than 2 billion doses of vaccines annually for routine immunization and outbreak response on behalf of nearly 100 countries. In collaboration with the [PAHO Revolving Fund](#), UNICEF is [leading efforts](#) to procure and supply doses of COVID-19 vaccines for COVAX. In addition, UNICEF, Gavi and WHO are working with governments around the clock to ensure that countries are ready to receive the vaccines, with appropriate cold chain equipment in place and health workers trained to dispense them. UNICEF is also playing a lead role in efforts to foster trust in vaccines, delivering vaccine confidence communications and tracking and addressing misinformation around the world.

### **About CEPI**

CEPI is an innovative partnership between public, private, philanthropic, and civil organisations, launched at Davos in 2017, to develop vaccines to stop future epidemics. CEPI has moved with great urgency and in coordination with WHO in response to the emergence of COVID-19. CEPI has initiated ten partnerships to develop vaccines against the novel coronavirus. The programmes are leveraging rapid response platforms already supported by CEPI as well as new partnerships.

Before the emergence of COVID-19, CEPI's priority diseases included Ebola virus, Lassa virus, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus, Nipah virus, Rift Valley Fever and Chikungunya virus. CEPI also invested in platform technologies that can be used for rapid vaccine and immunoprophylactic development against unknown pathogens (Disease X).

### **About Gavi**

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is a public-private partnership that helps vaccinate half the world's children against some of the world's deadliest diseases. Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has helped to immunise a whole generation – over 822 million children – and prevented more than 14 million deaths, helping to halve child mortality in 73 developing countries. Gavi also plays a key role in improving global health security by supporting health systems as well as funding global stockpiles for Ebola, cholera, meningitis and yellow fever vaccines. After two decades of progress, Gavi is now focused on protecting the next generation and reaching the unvaccinated children still being left behind, employing innovative finance and the latest technology – from drones to biometrics – to save millions more lives, prevent outbreaks before they can spread and help countries on the road to self-sufficiency. Learn more at [www.gavi.org](http://www.gavi.org) and connect with us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The Vaccine Alliance brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry, technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private sector partners. View the full list of donor governments and other leading organizations that fund Gavi's work [here](#).

### **About WHO**

The World Health Organization provides global leadership in public health within the United Nations system. Founded in 1948, WHO works with 194 Member States, across six regions and from more than 150 offices, to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable. Our goal for 2019-2023 is to ensure that a billion more people have universal health coverage, to protect a billion more people from health emergencies, and provide a further billion people with better health and wellbeing.

For updates on COVID-19 and public health advice to protect yourself from coronavirus, visit [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) and follow WHO on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [TikTok](#), [Pinterest](#), [Snapchat](#), [YouTube](#)

## **About UNICEF**

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org). For more information about COVID-19, visit [www.unicef.org/coronavirus](http://www.unicef.org/coronavirus). Find out more about UNICEF's work on the COVID-19 vaccines [here](#), or about UNICEF's work on immunization [here](#).

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## **About the ACT-Accelerator**

The Access to COVID-19 Tools ACT-Accelerator, is a new, ground-breaking global collaboration to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. It was set up in response to a call from G20 leaders in March and launched by the WHO, European Commission, France and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in April 2020.

The ACT-Accelerator is not a decision-making body or a new organisation, but works to speed up collaborative efforts among existing organisations to end the pandemic. It is a framework for collaboration that has been designed to bring key players around the table with the goal of ending the pandemic as quickly as possible through the accelerated development, equitable allocation, and scaled up delivery of tests, treatments and vaccines, thereby protecting health systems and restoring societies and economies in the near term. It draws on the experience of leading global health organisations which are tackling the world's toughest health challenges, and who, by working together, are able to unlock new and more ambitious results against COVID-19. Its members share a commitment to ensure all people have access to all the tools needed to defeat COVID-19 and to work with unprecedented levels of partnership to achieve it.

The ACT-Accelerator has four areas of work: diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines and the health system connector. Cross-cutting all of these is the workstream on Access & Allocation.