



STATEMENT

US GOVERNMENT SUPPORT NEEDED TO FINANCE COVID-19 OXYGEN EMERGENCY IN LMICS

7 April 2021
World Health Day

The [Every Breath Counts Coalition](#) welcomes the additional financial support provided by the US Government to strengthen the global COVID-19 response,¹ and calls for a portion of the funding to be allocated to help the worst-affected low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) address the medical oxygen shortages that are causing unnecessary suffering and preventable deaths.

Specifically, the Coalition is urging the US Government to allocate not less than \$US90.5 million to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to work in partnership with the Access to [COVID-19 Tools Accelerator \(ACT-A\) Oxygen Emergency Taskforce](#),² co-led by Unitaid and the Wellcome Trust, to increase the supply of medical oxygen and to train healthcare workers and biomedical engineers to use and maintain the equipment in the countries experiencing oxygen shortages.

Recognizing the importance of sustainable oxygen supply alongside therapeutics such as dexamethasone and other steroids for the treatment of COVID-19, the Oxygen Emergency Taskforce (part of the ACT-A therapeutics pillar) was announced on 25 February 2021 to mobilize resources and technical support to help the worst-affected LMICs respond to the rapidly rising demand for oxygen.

The Taskforce has determined an immediate funding need of \$US90 million to address key challenges in oxygen access and delivery in up to 20 countries and an overall funding need of \$US1.6 billion over the next 12 months – a figure that will be regularly reviewed by the Taskforce.

Since the ACT-A announcement, COVID-19 oxygen needs across all LMICs have risen rapidly and are now estimated at 14.7 million cubic meters per day, the equivalent of 2.1 million large cylinders.³ A subset of 35 countries spread across Latin America, Asia, and Africa are now reporting surges in oxygen needs. A US Government injection of \$US90.5 million would enable many of these countries to prevent oxygen shortages and related deaths in the coming months as COVID-19 vaccines roll-out.

It is important to note that to date, only three LMICs (Serbia, Morocco, and Turkey) have managed to protect more than 10% of their populations with one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.⁴

Additional US support for oxygen would also build on USAID's November 2020 investment of \$US18 million to help 11 countries - Iran, Afghanistan, Bolivia, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Mozambique, Peru, and Tajikistan - purchase and distribute oxygen-generating equipment and related consumables and durables, and finance technical assistance to train healthcare workers to use them.

US investments in oxygen will continue to save lives beyond the pandemic, especially among newborns, children, women in childbirth, and adults with communicable and/or non-communicable diseases, significantly increasing the impact of US leadership and investments in global health.

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¹ US President Joe Biden signed into law the \$US1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA, the Act) on 11 March 2021.

² Taskforce members include Unitaid, Wellcome Trust, WHO,* UNICEF, Global Fund, World Bank, UNOPS, Save the Children, Every Breath Counts, CHAI, and PATH, as well *including WHO Biomedical Procurement Consortium members ALIMA, BMGF, IMC, MSF, UNDP, UNHCR, UNOPS, USAID, and WFP.

³ See the [COVID-19 Oxygen Needs Tracker](#) by PATH, CHAI, and Every Breath Counts, 5 April, 2021.

⁴ See [Our World in Data](#), 5 April, 2021.