



G7 LEADERS MUST PROVIDE MORE SUPPORT TO AVERT COVID-19 OXYGEN SHORTAGES AND RELATED DEATHS

17 May 2021

The [Every Breath Counts Coalition](#) and the [Access to Medicine Foundation](#) call on G7 leaders to take immediate action to ensure that low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have the medical oxygen they need to treat all patients during the pandemic.

G7 leaders should engage directly with the major medical gas, oxygen plant and concentrator companies to ramp up supply, invest in the [Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator \(ACT-A\) Oxygen Emergency Taskforce](#)¹ to increase the support international health and development agencies can provide, and open up an “oxygen dialogue” with the worst-affected LMICs to prevent a repeat of the tragedy that has occurred in India.

The need for medical oxygen to treat COVID-19 patients across all LMICs has tripled in the last month and has now reached a massive 27 million cubic meters, the equivalent of 3.8 million large cylinders, every day. The annual cost of meeting this need is estimated at \$US6.3 billion.²

Without adequate supplies of medical oxygen, COVID-19 case fatality rates will remain high as currently oxygen is one of the only treatments available for COVID-19 patients in LMICs and vaccine rollout is slow. To date, not one of the LMICs experiencing a surging need for oxygen has managed to protect more than 20% of their population with one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (see table below).³

The G7 is well-positioned to engage with the leading medical gas companies as they are headquartered in G7 countries, including Air Liquide (France), Messer Group (Germany), SOL Group (Italy), Taiyo Nippon Sanso Corporation (Japan), Linde Group (United Kingdom), and Air Products (USA). G7 engagement with all of the major medical gas companies can ensure coordinated action to help end the oxygen crisis in India and prevent another.

G7 countries should also invest in the ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce so that international global health and development agencies can strengthen the support they are providing to LMIC governments. Co-led by Unitaaid and the Wellcome Trust and part of the ACT-A therapeutics pillar, the Taskforce is currently providing support to some countries but much more is needed as COVID-19 cases rapidly rise.

An initial, immediate injection of \$US200 million from the G7 for ACT-A emergency oxygen funding would enable the ACT-A to respond quickly (within days) to LMIC requests to alleviate imminent medical oxygen shortages and related deaths. Emergency funding must have the flexibility to procure bulk liquid oxygen, oxygen plants, concentrators, and related technologies and support governments to supply trained healthcare workers and biomedical engineers to use and maintain the equipment safely. There are 45 countries now experiencing, or at risk of, oxygen shortages.

¹ Taskforce members include Unitaaid, 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.

² See the [COVID-19 Oxygen Needs Tracker](#) by PATH, CHAI, and Every Breath Counts, 16 May, 2021.

³ See [Our World in Data](#), 16 May 2021.

It is also vital that G7 leaders have a direct line of communication to the LMIC government leaders on oxygen access to monitor oxygen and prevent the shortages that have caused so many deaths in India. India has shown us how vital it is that health and finance ministers in these at-risk countries have a direct line to international support before a crisis emerges.

Greater G7 investments in medical 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 G7 leadership and investments in global health. Medical oxygen is truly an investment that will strengthen all health systems.

Signees:

The Every Breath Counts Coalition and the Access to Medicine Foundation, with Aga Khan University, Amnesty International, Association of Support and Information to Relatives and Patients with Pneumonia (NEUMOI), Cintia Oliveira Dantas, Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW), Emergence Creative, Global Alliance for Surgical, Obstetric, Trauma, and Anaesthesia Care (G4 Alliance), Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN), Global Minnesota, International Society for Neglected Tropical Diseases, Gradian Health Systems, Lifebox, Malaria Consortium, Masimo, MGPS Acuitas, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, 19 to Zero, Pandemic Action Network, Panorama, PATH, Right to Health Action, Sabin Vaccine Institute, Save the Children, Union des Amis Sociaux Culturels d'Action en Développement (UNASCAD), University of Auckland, Village Reach.

Contacts:

Leith Greenslade, Coordinator, Every Breath Counts Coalition. The Every Breath Counts is a coalition of 50 United Nations and multilateral health and development agencies, companies, foundations, non-government organizations (NGOs), and academic institutions supporting low- and middle-income countries to reduce deaths from pneumonia, including from COVID-19. Email leith@justactions.org.

Jayasree Iyer, Executive Director of the Access to Medicine Foundation. The Access to Medicine Foundation is an independent organization that incentivizes the pharmaceutical industry to ramp up access to medicine gaps in low and middle income countries by using a multi-stakeholder consensus model. The Foundation defines key roles for the companies and tracks progress on opportunities for action on 82 diseases, including pandemics. Email jiyer@accesstomedicinefoundation.org.



LMIC Oxygen Hotspots Updated 16 May 2021	COVID-19 Oxygen Need (cubic meters per day)	COVID-19 Vaccine (% one dose)
India	16,606,446	10.23%
Brazil	2,802,795	16.81%
Argentina	957,820	17.68%
Turkey	752,058	17.66%
Colombia	735,632	8.55%
Iran	697,514	1.76%
Nepal	390,150	7.18%
Russia	382,262	9.78%
Philippines	291,291	2.05%
Peru	257,447	5.11%
Ukraine	226,883	2.15%
Iraq	205,006	1.13%
Malaysia	181,704	3.64%
Pakistan	150,645	1.33%
Thailand	109,156	2.03%
Costa Rica	105,851	12.9%
Sri Lanka	103,348	5.32%
Paraguay	99,287	2.24%
Kazakhstan	97,414	9.69%
South Africa	96,395	0.81%
Bolivia	81,474	6.94%
Ecuador	76,745	6.25%
Georgia	56,994	2.03%
Egypt	52,238	1.11%
Cuba	51,642	0.62%
Venezuela	49,966	0.88%
Honduras	42,874	0.56%
Guatemala	36,677	1.52%
Ethiopia	25,497	NA
Cambodia	21,408	12.36%
Kenya	17,799	1.74%
Uzbekistan	15,769	3.16%
Kyrgyzstan	14,010	0.57%
Cabo Verde	12,235	3.35%
Angola	11,699	1.78%
Afghanistan	10,809	1.15%
Papua New Guinea	9,435	0.03%
Madagascar	8,295	0%
Timor-Leste	6,906	2.32%
Syria	2,698	0.01%
Viet Nam	4,400	0.91%
Guyana	5,737	19.16%
Suriname	4,574	8.52%
LaoPDR	2,346	6.53%

LMICS with high (> 2,000 cubic meters per day) and rising oxygen needs and low (<20%) coverage with one dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Sources: COVID-19 Oxygen Needs Tracker and Our World in Data Vaccination, 16 May 2021.