

JOINT STATEMENT

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

Updated 11 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 and other medicines 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; to 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 to open up an “oxygen dialogue” with political leaders in 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 28.5 million cubic meters per day, the equivalent of 4.1 million large cylinders. The annual cost of meeting this need is estimated at \$US6.6 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, only one of the LMICs (Mongolia) 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 others.

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 Unitaïd and the Wellcome Trust, and part of the ACT-A therapeutics pillar, the Taskforce is currently providing oxygen and medicines to support countries. But much more is needed as COVID-19 cases rapidly rise and the imperative to respond quickly becomes more critical.

¹ Taskforce members include Unitaïd, 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, 10 May 2021.

³ See **Our World in Data**, 10 May 2021.

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, cylinders, concentrators, and related technologies and support governments to supply trained healthcare workers and biomedical engineers to use and maintain the equipment safely. There are more than 50 countries now at risk of oxygen shortages who may require this type of fast support in the coming weeks.

It is also vital that G7 leaders communicate directly with the LMIC government leaders at risk of oxygen shortages, to monitor the situation daily, have clear sight on country needs, and mobilize quickly to prevent the shortages that have caused so many deaths in India. India has shown us how critical 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. This would significantly increase the impact of G7 leadership and investments in global health. Medical oxygen is truly an investment that will strengthen all health systems and prepare countries for future respiratory pandemics, which are expected to occur.

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 (NEUMOAI), 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, Sanrai International, Save the Children, Union des Amis Socio Culturels d'Action en Développement (UNASCAD), University of Auckland, Village Reach.

Contacts:

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Jayasree Iyer, Executive Director, **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.

COVID-19 OXYGEN “Hotspots”	COVID-19 Oxygen Need (cubic meters per day)	COVID-19 Vaccination (% population one dose)	COVID-19 OXYGEN “Hotspots”	COVID-19 Oxygen Need (cubic meters per day)	COVID-19 Vaccination (% population one dose)
India	17,442,430	9.7%	Palestine	32,167	3.33%
Brazil	2,740,628	14.92%	Guatemala	42,760	1.14%
Turkey	1,277,550	17.29%	Ethiopia	31,841	NA
Argentina	934,371	17.01%	Cuba	47,015	NA
Iran	817,697	1.47%	Egypt	48,363	0.64%
Colombia	725,873	7.59%	Kenya	21,382	1.59%
Ukraine	277,308	1.97%	Armenia	17,775	0.02%
Philippines	327,264	1.79%	Cambodia	27,126	10.61%
Peru	283,062	3.9%	Uzbekistan	17,620	1.79%
Iraq	257,468	0.74%	Madagascar	10,040	NA
Pakistan	195,463	0.95%	Kyrgyzstan	14,993	0.41%
Nepal	330,880	7.18%	Cabo Verde	13,297	0.39%
Malaysia	158,544	3.37%	Angola	10,537	1.39%
Bangladesh	85,884	3.53%	Afghanistan	10,392	0.62%
Kazakhstan	97,686	8.71%	Syria	3,727	0.01%
Paraguay	99,993	1.84%	Guyana	4,472	19.16%
Thailand	91,381	1.86%	PNG	5,064	0.03%
Ecuador	86,251	5.56%	Timor Leste	4,565	0.2%
Bolivia	67,786	5.46%	Cameroon	17,780	0.04%
Tunisia	64,191	2.97%	LaoPDR	2,912	1.73%
Costa Rica	84,737	11.88%	Suriname	3,491	7.66%
Azerbaijan	41,140	9.92%	Mali	1,456	0.25%
Georgia	59,854	1.47%	Somalia	2,690	0.74%
Sri Lanka	83,549	4.34%	Guinea	2,117	0.89%
Venezuela	51,214	0.88%	CAR	1,541	NA
Mongolia	44,684	48.52%	Yemen	1,050	NA

Updated 10 May 2021

Sources: PATH/CHAI/Every Breath Counts COVID-19 Oxygen Needs Tracker and Our World in Data Vaccination

