



COVID SUMMIT STATEMENT

23 September 2021

The Every Breath Counts Coalition applauds the US President's call at the COVID Summit for a "supercharged" global effort to "save lives now by solving the oxygen crisis."

The Coalition also welcomed the announcement by USAID Administrator, Ambassador Samantha Power, of \$US50 million to increase access to bulk liquid oxygen as a "first step" towards raising \$US2 billion from a coalition of donors.

More funding for medical oxygen to treat COVID-19 patients in low-resource settings is urgently needed. There are currently 76 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) on the [Oxygen Crisis Risk List](#) and reports continue of deaths from lack of access to oxygen in many of these countries.

LMICs need around 13 million cubic meters of oxygen every day just to treat COVID-19 patients, according to the [COVID-19 Oxygen Needs Tracker](#). The annual cost of meeting this level of oxygen need is about \$US2.7 billion.

So far, the ACT-Accelerator Oxygen Taskforce has met just a fraction of that need, primarily with support from the Global Fund, the World Bank, UN agencies including WHO, UNICEF, Unitaids and UNOPS, and the Wellcome Trust.

But as Peter Sands, Executive Director of the Global Fund, stressed at the Summit – while they have been able to provide about \$US420 million to help 75 LMICs get oxygen supplies since March, they are running out of funding.

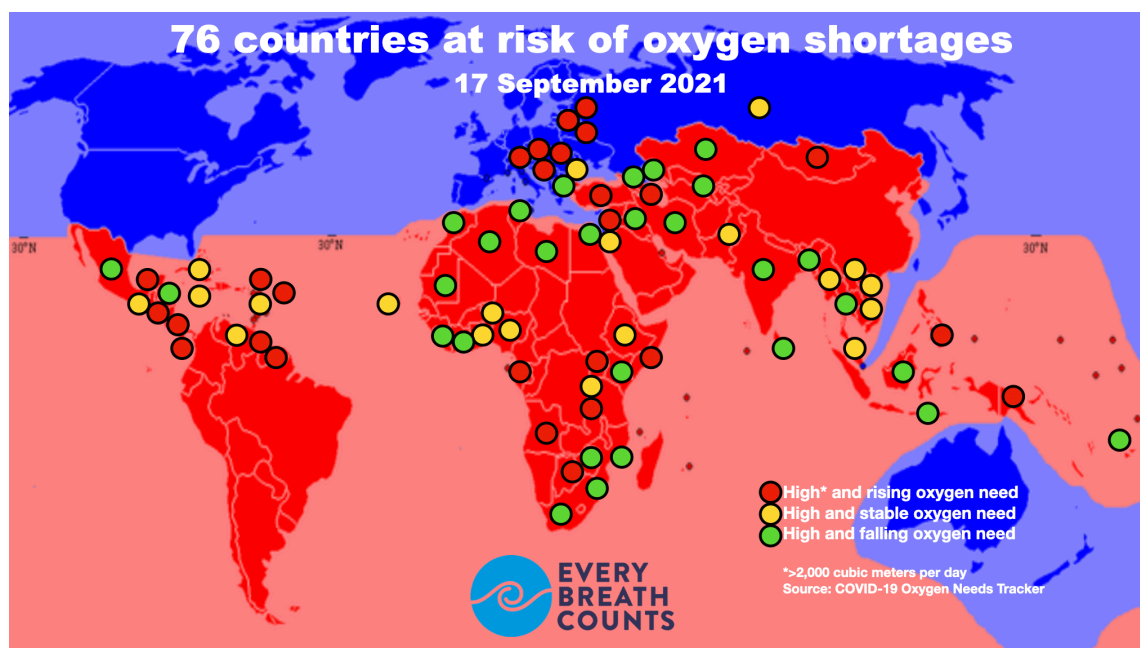
Without more financing, health facilities will run out of oxygen, families will be forced to wait for days and pay exorbitant prices for scarce oxygen while their loved ones suffer and many die. Oxygen is still one of the only treatments available for COVID-19 in low-resource settings, and without it other COVID-19 medicines such as dexamethasone are not as effective.

During the Summit, Raj Shah, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, described the oxygen crisis as solvable. He's right. Unlike for vaccines, tests and other treatments, most LMICs have access to oxygen supplies within their borders serving heavy industry (e.g., steel, gas, mining, etc.), or in a neighboring country. The challenge is working with companies and governments to bring the oxygen into national health systems rapidly. So far, flexible and fast financing to enable those transactions has been missing, especially to procure bulk liquid oxygen – a welcome focus of the US announcement.

Many other leaders also underscored the urgency of solving the global oxygen crisis during the Summit including Dr Tedros of the World Health Organization (WHO), President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa, President Phúc of Viet Nam, Dr Carissa Etienne of PAHO, Don Gips of the Skoll Foundation, Dr Githinji Gitahi of Amref Worldwide, Prime Minister Suga of Japan, and Secretary Blinken from the US State Department.

The Skoll Foundation's announcement of financial support to the Oxygen Hub and Build Health International is particularly important as both organizations are building local expertise to install, operate, and maintain oxygen plants in some of the worst-affected countries.

As a coalition of more than 100 organizations spanning the public and private sectors, the Every Breath Counts Coalition stands ready to work with the US Government to support the global oxygen target of "ensuring that oxygen is readily accessible for inpatient health facilities in all regions no later than 2022," and the mobilization of \$US2 billion to finance the achievement of this target.



Success will depend on more G20 governments stepping up to help LMICs invest in oxygen from all sources – liquid, on-site hospital oxygen plants and mobile concentrators – and more philanthropic donors complementing those efforts.

Crucially, investing in oxygen will continue to save lives beyond the pandemic – including among precious newborns and children, women in childbirth, adults with communicable and non-communicable diseases, and patients requiring surgery.

It is only by acting together with renewed urgency on all arms of the COVID-19 response – vaccines, tests, treatments like oxygen and PPE – that we stand any chance of stopping COVID-19 deaths from reaching five million and ending this pandemic for everyone, everywhere.

Every Breath Counts is a coalition of governments, United Nations and multilateral 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, in order to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to strengthen health systems.

Contact: Leith Greenslade, Coordinator, Every Breath Counts Coalition
 Leith@justactions.org, +1 917 969 6084