

STATEMENT

THE ACT-A OXYGEN EMERGENCY TASKFORCE...ONE YEAR ON

Updated 17 March 2022

One year after the launch of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) Oxygen Emergency Taskforce, what has been achieved? Has this unprecedented effort by more than 20 United Nations and global health agencies to work together to support low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to mitigate pandemic-related medical oxygen shortages delivered on its promise? And what remains to be done in 2022?

Against the backdrop of widespread oxygen shortages across Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, the **ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce** was launched on 25 February 2021. Unitaid and the Wellcome Trust were announced as Co-chairs with membership drawn from the World Health Organization (WHO) and its Biomedical Consortium,¹ UNICEF, UNOPS, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (The Global Fund), the World Bank, USAID, the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), PATH, Save the Children, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the Access to Medicine Foundation, and the Every Breath Counts (EBC) Coalition.

Later in the year, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) joined the Taskforce. As of January 2022, Unitaid is the sole chair.

The first phase (February - October 2021)

The initial focus of the Taskforce was to pursue five key objectives:

1. *Assess acute and longer-term oxygen needs in LMICs*
2. *Support and review LMIC funding requests to ACT-A Taskforce members*
3. *Procure oxygen and related products and services*
4. *Increase LMIC access to liquid oxygen, oxygen plant repairs, and critical parts (e.g., zeolite, compressors, etc.)*
5. *Strengthen advocacy and communication efforts to highlight the importance of oxygen and accelerate financing available via the ACT-A*

During this period, Taskforce members mobilized ~\$US700 million in grant financing to help LMICs avert oxygen shortages and ensured that access to oxygen was front and center of the overall ACT-A response.²

Between February and October 2021, **The Global Fund**, supported by several government and private sector donors, provided ~\$US475 million in grants to help more than 66 low- and lower-middle income countries purchase oxygen supplies, including Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) plants, concentrators, liquid oxygen, ventilators, cylinders, pulse oximeters, and more.

WHO and **UNICEF** provided direct technical and operational support, procuring \$US132 million and delivering \$US89 million worth of oxygen supplies to more than 120 countries, including oxygen plants, concentrators, cylinders, advanced respiratory equipment, patient monitors, pulse oximeters, and oxygen delivery consumables, supported by several governments and private sector donors.³

Unitaid, the **Wellcome Trust**, and the **BMGF**, provided ~\$US30 million to the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE) and to NGOs including **PATH** and **CHAI** to increase the oxygen support they provide to specific LMIC governments - for procurement as well as maintenance and training.

Over 2021, Unitaid invested an additional \$US17 million to NGOs ALIMA, PATH, Partners in Health, The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), and CHAI, as well as the WHE, for catalytic interventions including rapidly establishing

¹ Members of the WHO Biomedical Consortium include ALIMA, BMGF, International Medical Corps (IMC), MSF, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, UNOPS, USAID, and the World Food Programme (WFP).

² The World Bank also provided significant loan financing as part of their \$US157 billion **COVID-19 Crisis Response**, which some LMICs have used to improve medical oxygen access. The value of these investments is not included.

³ This is in addition to the \$US96 million of oxygen support that WHO and UNICEF provided to 145 countries in 2020.

COVID-19 treatment facilities in West Africa, distributing pulse oximeters, and improving the oxygen market by putting up collateral for emergency oxygen access and equipment stockpiling.

And in September 2021 at the Global COVID-19 Summit, the **US Government** announced \$US50 million to increase access to medical oxygen in partner countries and called for a coalition of governments, foundations, NGOs, and companies to mobilize significant additional funding for oxygen access to “Save Lives Now.”

The second phase (October 2021 - present)

On 28 October 2021, the ACT-A released a new **Strategic Plan and Budget** seeking an additional \$US1.4 billion to enable the ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce to continue to finance and provide oxygen supplies to LMICs in need during 2022.

The new strategy set an immediate goal of supporting the delivery of 110 to 140 million cubic meters of oxygen to LMICs by the end of 2021 and a longer-term goal of meeting the medical oxygen needs of 6 to 8 million severe and critical patients by September 2022.

The majority of the oxygen funding needed is for procurement and delivery and to support the repair, maintenance, and scale up of local medical oxygen production via The Global Fund, UNICEF, Unitaid, and WHO.

To implement the new strategy the Taskforce announced three new objectives:

1. *Prioritize allocation of additional resources towards highest impact with a special focus on identifying priority countries and short- and long-term oxygen sources*
2. *Coordinate action on quick wins with a special focus on monitoring PSA plant repairs and coordinating financing for technical support*
3. *Address supply gaps and bottlenecks for services and related equipment with a special focus on unlocking liquid oxygen supply agreements, expanding service offerings on PSA plants, and resolving bottlenecks in the supply of components and spare parts*

In December 2021, the **US Government** announced a further \$US75 million for additional support for USAID’s Rapid Response efforts, which includes investment to help strengthen oxygen market systems to improve reliable oxygen production and delivery.

In March 2022, Unitaid announced a further \$US56 million to rapidly address global inequities in access to medical oxygen by supporting the work of ALIMA, CHAI, Partners in Health (PIH), and the WHO Health Emergencies Programme. The projects will not only ensure medical oxygen is available for COVID-19 patients but will also lay the groundwork to address the access to oxygen problem for the long-term, including strengthening future pandemic response.

A detailed list of oxygen milestones by Taskforce members to date is outlined below.

What’s next?

As a result of the critical work of the Taskforce in 2021, many LMICs entered 2022 with a far greater capacity to meet the oxygen needs of COVID-19 patients. Despite causing less severe disease, the sheer scale of global transmission of the Omicron variant has driven hospital admissions to record highs in many countries, increasing the need for medical oxygen.

More support is needed to bridge LMIC oxygen gaps during 2022. Oxygen therapy remains the first line of treatment for those with severe and critical COVID-19 in low-resource settings and the ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce has demonstrated that it can work effectively with LMIC governments and their local partners to increase access to medical oxygen in hospitals, ensure safe oxygen therapy to patients, and support staff to operate and maintain the equipment.

Most of the G20 nations have not yet contributed to ACT-A efforts and to oxygen support. Outreach and coordinated efforts through the ACT-A mechanism continue to mobilize countries and private sector donors with the financial and/or industrial capacity to support LMICs in their national COVID-19 responses, including increased access to oxygen.

Investments made via the Taskforce will not only help countries reduce COVID-19-related deaths but will strengthen health systems for the long term so they can continue delivering oxygen to save lives well beyond the pandemic. This will help countries make progress on many of their Sustainable Development Goal targets, including reducing deaths among newborns, children, women in childbirth, and adults with both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Investing in medical oxygen will also help countries improve national pandemic preparedness and response, as the risk of respiratory outbreaks where oxygen is a cornerstone of critical care remains high.

ACT-A Emergency Oxygen Taskforce Milestones

February 2021 - February 2022

2021

February

- Unitaid announces the [ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce](#)

March

- The Global Fund includes oxygen in their [COVID-19 Response Mechanism](#) (C19RM)
- EBC releases [Open Letter](#) appealing to LMIC decision-makers to leverage ACT-A funding for oxygen supplies
- PATH launches the [A2O2 Resource Library](#), funded by Unitaid and a grant from BMGF

April

- PATH, CHAI, and EBC release the [COVID-19 Oxygen Needs Tracker 2.0](#) (with costing) as part of the [COVID-19 Respiratory Care Response Coordination project](#), funded by a grant from BMGF
- EBC launches the [Oxygen Crisis “Risk List”](#) to highlight LMICs at risk of shortages
- WHO profiles medical oxygen in “[Science in 5](#)”
- WHO launches [guidance tools](#) to support oxygen cylinder safety, medical gas piping safety, and fire mitigation
- PATH procures \$US5 million of oxygen equipment (cylinders, accessories, pulse oximeters, etc.), funded by Unitaid
- PATH and CHAI [request proposals](#) for procurement and supply of oxygen cylinders and accessories to Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda and Zambia, funded by Unitaid

May

- The Global Fund announces \$US75 million oxygen support to [India](#)
- EBC releases social medical campaign “ACT-A Oxygen Stories” beginning with [UNICEF in Madagascar](#)
- UNICEF announces \$US182 million grant from the Canadian Government to finance COVID-19 treatments via UNICEF’s [COVID-19 ACT-A Supplies Financing Facility](#) (SFF)
- EBC launches [Oxygen Plant “Find & Fix List”](#)
- EBC releases [ACT-A Oxygen Financing Guidance](#) to LMIC Health Ministers
- WHO hosts webinar, “[Bridging the Gap Between Oxygen Needs and Technical Solutions](#)”
- Save the Children announces new support to [Nepal](#) including more than 1,000 oxygen concentrators and other critical oxygen equipment, funded by The Global Fund
- BMGF provides grant financing for [oxygen plants](#) in India, with a focus on the states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar
- UNICEF launches Request for Expressions of Interest for [Oxygen System Service Contractors](#)

June

- Unitaid and CHAI announce [landmark agreements](#) with medical gas giants Air Liquide and Linde
- EBC releases ACT-A Oxygen Stories about [World Bank in Tajikistan](#), [Global Fund in India](#), and [Save the Children in Nepal](#)
- Unitaid and EBC publish oxygen commentary in [The Independent](#)
- Unitaid launches [Access to Oxygen Social Media Campaign](#)
- The Global Fund releases an [Oxygen Crisis Infographic](#) and announces 33% of [C19RM](#) health products awards are for oxygen
- CHAI partners with Afrox to [supply oxygen to Zambia](#), funded by Unitaid
- ACT-A profiles oxygen in “[The Accelerator](#)” newsletter
- EBC and Access to Medicine Foundation co-host the third [Access to Medical Oxygen Roundtable](#) and publish [report](#)
- UNICEF supports the procurement of \$US8.5 million worth of oxygen equipment to 29 LMICs, funded by UNICEF’s [ACT-A Supplies Financing Facility](#) (ACT-A SFF)
- UNICEF expands its global oxygen technical team to support 45 countries with oxygen planning, procurement, product delivery, and programmatic use

July

- The Global Fund approves \$US135 million in oxygen and oxygen-related products and tools to 25 low- and lower-middle income countries and encourages countries to consider [liquid oxygen](#) in their funding requests
- EBC releases [G20 Oxygen Statement](#)
- EBC releases ACT-A Oxygen Stories with [WHO in Somalia](#) and [UNOPS in Nepal](#)
- i+solutions issues Request for Proposals for oxygen suppliers and equipment, funded by The Global Fund

- WHO publishes [Technical Consultation on Oxygen Access Scale-Up for COVID-19](#)
- PATH releases [Sub-Saharan Africa Respiratory Care Equipment Distributors](#) report and the [Oxygen Generation and Storage](#) series brief as part of the [COVID-19 Respiratory Care Response Coordination project](#), funded by a grant from BMGF
- CHAI supports Cameroon to develop a five year oxygen plan and the procurement of oxygen concentrators, respirators, pulse oximeters, PSA plants, and cylinders, funded by Unitaid
- WHO released a [draft revision](#) to the International Pharmacopoeia affirming the safety of medical oxygen 93% generated by Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) and Vacuum Swing Adsorption (VSA) technology
- UNICEF releases Request for Proposals for [Oxygen Generation Plant Repairs and Biomedical Engineering Services](#)

August

- The Global Fund approves [~\\$U40 million](#) in oxygen and oxygen-related products and tools to 18 low- and lower-middle income countries and reports that oxygen continues to represent a high percentage (21%) of awarded funding - [~\\$US412 million](#)
- EBC releases ACT-A Oxygen Story with [PATH in Tanzania](#)
- i+solutions issues Request for Proposals for the supply of [oxygen plants](#) and medical oxygen solutions, funded by The Global Fund
- PATH releases [Respiratory Care Equipment Procurement Options](#) brief as part of the [COVID-19 Respiratory Care Response Coordination project](#), funded by a grant from BMGF

September

- EBC and the Platform for Civil Society and Community Representatives to ACT-A co-host [“Africa Oxygen Briefing”](#)
- National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) in Nigeria issues an [Invitation to Tender](#) for oxygen plant optimization in government hospitals, funded by The Global Fund
- US Government hosts [Global COVID-19 Summit](#) announces \$US50 million for oxygen support as part of the “Save Lives Now” agenda
- UNICEF secures long-term agreements (LTAs) with two global suppliers for the procurement of PSA plants and accessories
- EBC releases ACT-A Oxygen Story with [CHAI in Zambia](#)
- UNICEF supports the procurement of \$US8.9 million worth of oxygen equipment to 48 LMICs, funded by UNICEF’s [ACT-A Supplies Financing Facility](#) (ACT-A SFF)
- UNICEF adds PSA plants to the [UNICEF Catalogue](#) and sends the first [Oxygen “Plant-in-a-Box”](#) to Uganda
- The Global Fund reports that it has awarded [\\$US163.5 million](#) for new PSA plants and \$US60 million for liquid oxygen

October

- EBC and Unitaid co-host “Oxygen and the Pandemic, a briefing for Offices of UN Ambassadors”
- Access to Medicine Foundation releases Fortune article, [“With COVID patients gasping for breath, it’s time to close the oxygen gap”](#)
- EBC and CDDEP co-host [“The Global Oxygen Crisis”](#)
- WHO publishes interim guidance on [WHO Good Manufacturing Practices \(GMP\) for medicinal gases](#)
- EBC letter campaign to select G20 Foreign Ministers and Departments
- PATH releases [Business Models in Respiratory Care](#) as part of the [COVID-19 Respiratory Care Response Coordination project](#), funded by a grant from BMGF
- The Global Fund reports it has awarded [\\$US477 million](#) for oxygen and clinical care-related products representing 15.5% of overall health product C19RM spend
- WHO releases an updated [draft revision](#) to the International Pharmacopoeia affirming the safety of medical oxygen 93% generated by Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) and Vacuum Swing Adsorption (VSA) technology

November

- EBC publishes [Project Syndicate](#) article calling for G20 to invest in oxygen via the ACT-Accelerator
- EBC launches ACT-A Oxygen Story with [BHI and WHO in Guinea-Bissau](#)
- BMGF announces grant funding to [Build Health International](#) to repair broken oxygen plants in LMICs
- CHAI supports oxygen training for hospital staff across five cities in Ecuador, funded by Unitaid funding
- CHAI supports the procurement, installation, and logistics for PSA plants and cylinders in Ethiopia, with Unitaid funding
- CHAI launches oxygen training for hospital staff from 13 regions in Zimbabwe, with Unitaid funding
- UNOPS provides an oxygen plant and training for [Kite Teaching Hospital, Zambia](#), with financing from UNICEF
- The Global Fund releases a new [Strategy \(2023-28\)](#) which includes an Evolving Objective to support countries to prevent, prepare for, and respond to, pandemics

- UNICEF strengthens oxygen systems in 22 countries, with \$US4 million of [Humanitarian Action for Children \(HAC\)](#) funds

December

- EBC releases [Oxygen Statement to Development Ministers](#)
- USAID announces a further **\$US75 million** for additional support for USAID's Rapid Response efforts which includes investment to help strengthen oxygen market systems to improve reliable oxygen production and delivery
- EBC releases ACT-A Oxygen Story with [CHAI and Unitaid in Uganda](#)
- WHO launches [guidance and checklists](#) for care, cleaning, disinfection, and sterilization of respiratory devices
- PATH supports Malawi's release of their first [National Oxygen Roadmap](#) as part of the [COVID-19 Respiratory Care Response Coordination project](#), funded by a grant from BMGF
- CHAI supports oxygen and piping to 11 government hospitals and trains staff in seven hospitals in pulse oximetry and oxygen, funded by a grant from BMGF and Unitaid
- Access to Medicine Foundation releases new [Strategic Direction 2022-26](#), including research and engagement to incentivize medical oxygen companies to bridge oxygen gaps for underserved facilities and vulnerable populations
- The Global Fund reports **\$US489 million** awarded for oxygen and clinical care-related products representing 15.3% of overall C19RM health product spend
- i+solutions issues Request for Proposals for [Oxygen Supplies and Equipment](#), funded by The Global Fund
- WHO launches [video training series](#) on biomedical use, corrective, and preventative maintenance
- CHAI supported a situational analysis of oxygen therapy across 515 health facilities and 15 oxygen plants across nine provinces of DRC, funded by Unitaid
- CHAI supports the procurement and installation of oxygen cylinder manifolds and piping across 11 facilities in Rwanda, funded by Unitaid
- UNICEF supports the procurement of \$US12.5 million worth of oxygen equipment to 68 LMICs, funded by UNICEF's [ACT-A Supplies Financing Facility](#) (ACT-A SFF)
- UNICEF installs first [Oxygen Plant-in-a-Box](#) in Soroti Regional Referral Hospital in Uganda, funded by UNICEF's [ACT-A Supplies Financing Facility](#) (ACT-A SFF) and UK Aid

2022

January

- EBC releases ACT-A Oxygen Story with [PATH in Zambia](#)
- CHAI releases [Request for Proposals](#) to improve medical oxygen infrastructure across ~12 hospitals in Guatemala and Ecuador, funded by Unitaid
- UNICEF calls for [Expressions of Interest](#) from biomedical engineers and/or medical oxygen program experts-for a Roster of Consultants

February

- African CDC and EBC issue a [Statement on Access to Medical Oxygen in Africa](#) for the African Union - European Union Summit, with the support of Unitaid, WHO, UNICEF, and the Global Fund
- CHAI supports the government of Cambodia to finalize a one-year Oxygen Preparedness Plan covering all aspects of oxygen systems, funded by a grant from BMGF and Unitaid funding
- EBC releases ACT-A Oxygen Story with [CHAI in Nigeria](#)
- UNICEF makes awards to global Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) producers Linde Asia Pacific and Afrox for delivery and implementation of all-inclusive LMO services for health facilities in multiple LMICs.

March

- Unitaid announces a further \$US56 million to rapidly address global inequities in access to medical oxygen by supporting the work of ALIMA, CHAI, Partners in Health (PIH), and the WHO Health Emergencies Programme.

For the past year, the ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce has worked closely with many partners and would like to specifically acknowledge the [ACT-A Facilitation Council](#) CSO representatives, the ACT-Accelerator Coordination Hub, the [ACT-A Communities and Civil Society Platform](#), ACT-A Therapeutics Pillar leaders and CSO representatives, [Friends of the Global Fight](#), and the [Unitaid Board NGO representatives](#) for their strong support of the ACT-A access to oxygen agenda.

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