



STATEMENT

The Global Fund Replenishment and Access to Medical Oxygen

Global Fund's Seventh Replenishment Conference

20 September 2022

The Every Breath Counts Coalition calls on donors - public and private - to fully replenish [The Global Fund](#) to ensure that it can continue its vital work helping eligible governments close the massive gaps in access to medical oxygen that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

According to the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), oxygen is an essential medicine with no substitute. The world saw just how essential during the pandemic, when hospitals struggled to supply the vast amounts of medical oxygen needed to treat COVID-19 patients.

When many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) went into oxygen crisis in 2020 - elevating COVID-19 deaths and causing immeasurable suffering among patients, their families, and healthcare workers desperate but unable to provide treatment - The Global Fund responded.

In February 2021, the Executive Director of The Global Fund, Peter Sands, spoke out, saying “*Vaccines alone are not going to do this. We could do a better job in saving lives by providing more of what we can currently deliver. In many places, the constraint is oxygen.*”¹

Soon after, on 11 March 2021, The Global Fund announced a [COVID-19 Response Mechanism](#), called C19RM, which for the first time enabled governments to apply to The Global Fund for oxygen supplies as part of the \$US3.5 billion provided by the United States Government.

And they did. To date, over 90 LMICs have requested over \$US600 million in [oxygen supplies](#) from The Global Fund, including hospital-based oxygen plants, mobile oxygen concentrators, liquid oxygen, pulse oximeters, ventilators, patient monitors, masks, consumables, and much more.

Global Fund financing forms the lion's share of the oxygen support coordinated by the [Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator \(ACT-A\) Oxygen Emergency Taskforce](#), which was established in February 2021 to drive the multilateral oxygen support effort. The Taskforce is chaired by Unitaid and includes leading global health and development agencies, donors, and NGOs.²

But even with this support, massive gaps in access to oxygen remain in many LMIC health systems, leaving populations vulnerable to mass fatalities in the face of another pandemic.

¹ “[Oxygen shortages bite in poorer countries battling Covid](#),” Financial Times, 1 February 2021.

² The ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce is chaired by Unitaid and includes WHO, UNICEF, The Global Fund, World Bank, UNDP, UNOPs, Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), PATH, Every Breath Counts Coalition, Save the Children, Access to Medicine Foundation, USAID, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, ELMA Philanthropies, and others.

The Global Fund must continue to play a leading role in financing access to medical oxygen across LMICs delivering on its new evolving objective to, “contribute to pandemic preparedness and response” as outlined in the new 2023 to 2028 strategy [Fighting Pandemics and Building a Healthier and More Equitable World](#).

Eligible countries should be able to work with The Global Fund to provide the most cost-effective and sustainable oxygen solutions. Support should be provided in ways that strengthen local oxygen markets, increase industry competition and price transparency, and improve affordability. It is not enough to invest in oxygen equipment alone. Investments in a well-trained health and biomedical engineering workforce are required to fully operationalize new oxygen equipment and keep it working.

And the Fund should also work closely with global health partners via future multilateral efforts such as the planned Global Oxygen Alliance that will expand oxygen support to LMICs beyond the emergency response to improve long-term, sustainable access.

These efforts will not only reduce the risk of a repeat of the tragic COVID-19 oxygen crisis in the context of a future pandemic, but will strengthen health systems to save lives now.

As medical oxygen is a treatment for a vast array of health conditions, including infections (e.g., pneumonia, tuberculosis, malaria), non-communicable diseases (e.g., COPD, heart disease, stroke), neonatal disorders, and conditions requiring surgery, investments will accelerate achievement of a large number of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

The Every Breath Counts Coalition calls on G7 and G20 governments, other governments, and private donors to join forces with the US Government to ensure that The Global Fund is fully financed and fit to deliver on its expanded purpose in an era of rapidly emerging pandemics and constant stress on health systems.

Contact

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