

# Covax issues distribution list for first vaccine wave

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The Covax programme to ensure equitable worldwide access to COVID-19 vaccines on Wednesday published its first distribution list, with enough doses for countries to immunise more than three percent of their populations by mid-2021.

The distribution plan comes with lower-income countries falling behind in the vaccination race—a problem Covax was set up to address.

It broke down how the programme's initial 337.2 million doses will be distributed, with first deliveries expected in late February.

Some 145 countries are set to receive enough doses to immunise 3.3 percent of their collective population by mid-2021, Covax said.

A statement said the initial distribution was in line with a target "to protect the most vulnerable groups such as health care workers" in the first half of the year.

"Soon we'll be able to start delivering life-saving vaccines globally—an outcome we know is

essential if we're to have any chance of being able to beat this pandemic," Gavi chief executive Seth Berkeley told a news conference.

Covax is co-led by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Gavi vaccine alliance, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

## India tops list

Countries will receive doses in proportion to population size, with the most going to India (97.2 million), Pakistan (17.2 million), Nigeria (16 million), Indonesia (13.7 million), Bangladesh (12.8 million) and Brazil (10.6 million).

Other big recipients are Ethiopia (8.9 million), the Democratic Republic of Congo (6.9 million), Mexico (6.5 million), the Philippines (5.6 million) and Egypt (5.1 million).

WHO immunisation programme coordinator Ann Lindstrand said priority was given to countries that had not started vaccinating, while health worker deaths in January were also factored in.

For the 92 lower- and lower-middle income economies involved in Covax, funding is covered through donations, while for richer countries, buying into bulk purchases operates like a back-up insurance policy for their own vaccination programmes.

The first wave distribution list includes 240 million doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, licensed to the Serum Institute of India; 96 million advance-purchased AstraZeneca-Oxford doses; and 1.2 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Both vaccines require two injected doses.

Pfizer-BioNTech is the only vaccine to have received emergency use approval from the WHO. Evaluation is under way for the AstraZeneca-

Oxford vaccine.

Berkeley said though they were "impatient... to get these doses out, there are conditions that must be in place".

### **18 countries getting Pfizer**

The Pfizer-BioNTech doses—requiring special ultra-cold storage—are destined for 18 countries by the end of March, with Colombia, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, South Korea and Ukraine getting the most at 117,000 doses each.

The other scheduled recipients are Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Georgia, Maldives, Moldova, Mongolia, the Palestinian Territories, Rwanda and Tunisia.

The first round list, including both vaccine types, is subject to change but should allow countries to plan ahead.

Some wealthy self-financing countries were on the list, including South Korea (2.6 million doses), Canada (1.9 million) and New Zealand (250,000).

Tuvalu is set to receive the smallest number of doses at 4,800, followed by Nauru and Monaco with 7,200 each.

Around 190 countries are involved in Covax.

Countries unlisted this time have either exercised their rights to opt-out, have not submitted vaccine requests, or have not yet been allocated doses.

The United States under new President Joe Biden recently said it would be taking part in Covax.

Covax aims to secure enough vaccines for at least the most vulnerable 20 percent in participating countries by the end of 2021.

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