

Egypt gets hundreds of thousands of vaccines via Covax

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Egypt has received over 854,000 coronavirus vaccines through the Covax facility for lower and middle income countries, the World Health Organization said Thursday.

The AstraZeneca vaccines, the first to be provided through COVAX to Egypt, were delivered by plane to Cairo late Wednesday, WHO said in a statement.

Egypt has registered more than 200,000 cases of coronavirus, including some 12,000 deaths.

The [health ministry](#) has said frontline health workers, the elderly and people with [chronic diseases](#) will be prioritised in the vaccine effort, in line with global guidelines.

WHO said 40 million doses would be provided to Egypt—enough for 20 percent of the country's 100 million population.

The Covax programme aims to help ensure 20 percent of the population in recipient countries is vaccinated by end-2021.

Egypt began its Covid-19 immunisation programme on January 24, becoming one of the

first countries in Africa to begin vaccinating its citizens.

At a virtual press conference held by the WHO's eastern Mediterranean division, officials acknowledged the organisation faced "challenges" in reaching its 20-percent target.

Difficulties included "creating lines of production... and other logistical challenges to deliver shipments to countries", said Doctor Ahmed al-Mandhari, WHO's regional director.

He cited in particular an absence of sufficient "storage facilities", as some vaccines in the Covax programme—notably Pfizer's—have to be kept at extremely low temperatures.

This was in addition to "funding and financial challenges", as well as "competition by rich countries" for doses, a situation that the WHO has warned constrains the efficacy of overall efforts to defeat the mutating virus.

WHO officials pointed to the emergence of two new variants in war-torn Libya, warning they were likely to spread to both urban and rural areas.

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