



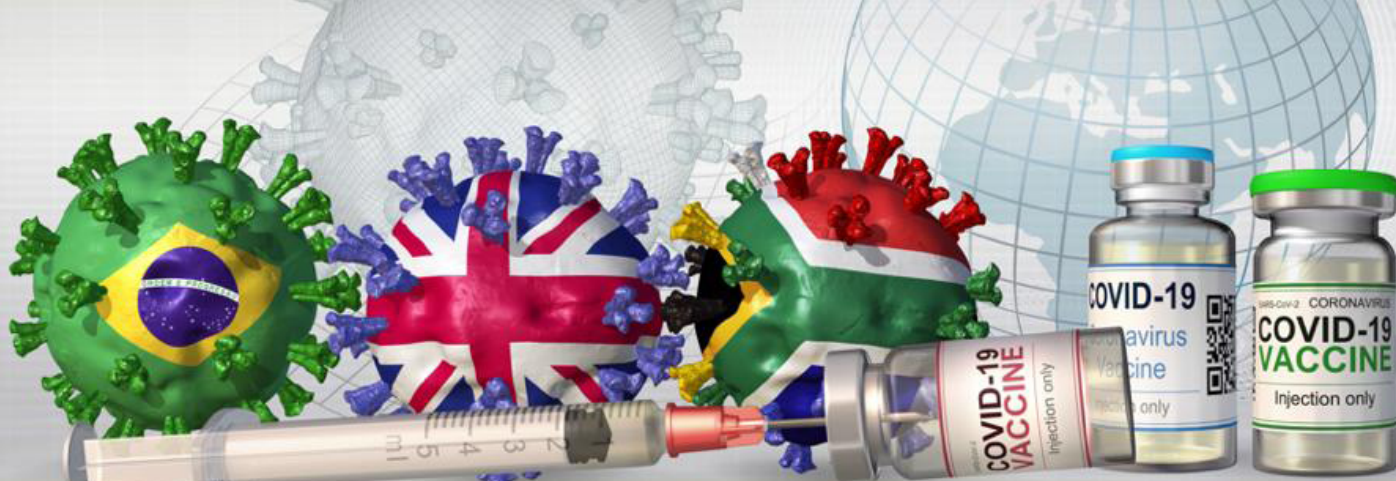
VIRTUAL DIALOGUE SERIES

19 & 20

April | 1:30pm - 3:30pm /GMT

Africa's Response to COVID-19
and Equitable Access to
Vaccines & Vaccination

CONCEPT NOTE



INTRODUCTION

1. Prior to the earliest confirmed cases of the COVID-19 pandemic on the African continent, there was unquestionably a level of preparedness as a result of collaboration between African Union (AU) Member States, key institutions such as the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC) and their partners to strengthen the continent's readiness and response capacities. The continued efforts to minimize and mitigate the impact of the virus are clear with the adoption of a continental strategy to combat the pandemic, the establishment of an African Medical Supplies Platform, regular continental briefings and advisories on the pandemic, the establishment of a COVID-19 Response Fund and the continuous sensitization of citizens. However, with the pandemic still inhabiting the continent, its effects on the lives and livelihood of Africans equally remains apparent.
2. This is evident in the huge negative economic effects including exchange rate depreciations, trade disruptions and a projected contraction in Africa's GDP, the first in 25 years. Additionally, the continent has also witnessed increasing mortality rates, rise in unemployment and excessive strain on health institutions, lockdowns, closures of schools and businesses, increase in Gender Based Violence (GBV), reduction in travel as well as related trade movements among other effects. As the continent also continues to face the threats of further lockdowns to stem the tide of rising infections and being late in the vaccine race, the socio-economic fallout of the pandemic threatens to undermine years of sustained growth and developments as well as undermining the operationalization of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement.
3. Furthermore, the continued spread of the virus as evident in the recent briefing updates of the Africa-CDC¹ indicate a total of 3,678,523 COVID-19 cases and 95,529 deaths have been reported in the 55 AU Member States. This is 3.5% of all cases reported globally. The majority (84%) of these countries also continue to report community transmission and up to twelve of them have reported the presence of the 501Y.V1 (five Member States) and 501Y.V2 (seven Member States) variants. Of the countries actively reporting COVID-19 epidemiologic data, twenty countries are reporting case fatality rates higher than the global case fatality rate of 2.2%. In general, new COVID-19 cases being reported still maintain a steady increase on the continent in comparison to previous months.

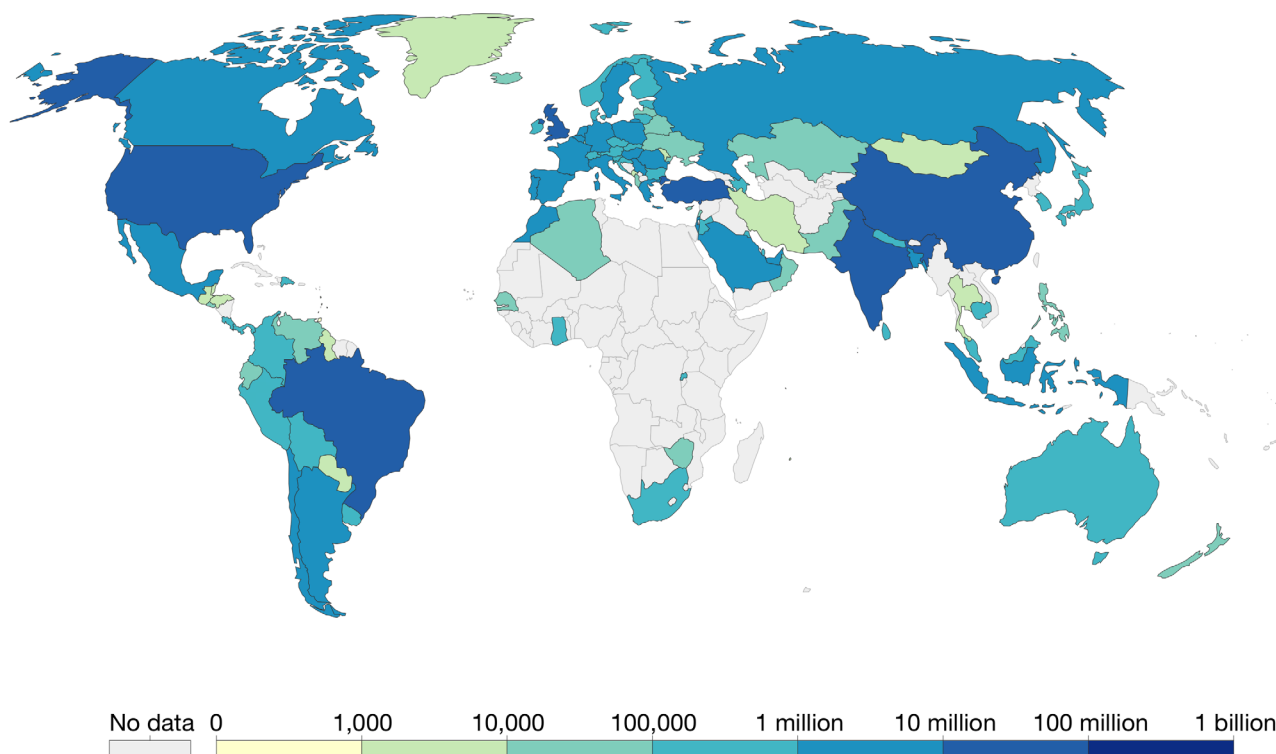
¹ Outbreak Brief #52 issued on 12 January 2021 on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic: <https://africacdc.org/download/outbreak-brief-52-coronavirus-disease-2019-COVID-19-pandemic/>

4. With Africa now well into its second wave of the pandemic and the new variant of the virus already reported in several Member States, adherence to public health and social measures have become more important now more than ever in preventing the further spread of virus. Beyond containment however, there is the desire on the urgent need to provide COVID-19 vaccines on the continent and most importantly ensure the efficient vaccination of African citizens. This aspiration is further bolstered by the growing vaccination campaigns currently undertaken by developed countries globally which has left the developing world including African countries behind on the queue to obtain much needed vaccines. This has resulted in several developed countries seemingly amassing existing vaccines beyond a possible fairer sharing system that gives developing countries a chance to obtain sufficient vaccines. The political and socio-economic impact of this could be severe as African countries are forced to maintain containment measures while normal social and economic activity resumes in other parts of the world.

Cumulative COVID-19 vaccination doses administered, Mar 10, 2021

This is counted as a single dose, and may not equal the total number of people vaccinated, depending on the specific dose regime (e.g. people receive multiple doses).

Our World
in Data



Source: Official data collated by Our World in Data – Last updated 11 March, 11:40 (London time)

CC BY

Image above shows administration of vaccination doses globally based on data collated by <https://ourworldindata.org/COVID-vaccinations>

5. Action is already underway to counteract this discrepancy with the African Union securing up to 270 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine through its COVID-19 African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT)² and independently of the COVAX³ facility that is aimed at distributing COVID-19 vaccines to lower-income countries. While the COVAX arrangement anticipates the delivery of up to 600 million doses of the vaccine to the continent by the end of 2021 if effectively implemented, this remains well below the required threshold to achieve herd immunity.
6. In view of the effective administration of these vaccines, the AU and the Africa CDC with the support of the WHO have also developed a COVID-19 Vaccine Development and Access Strategy which was endorsed by the African Union Bureau of Heads of State and Government in August, 2020. A necessary survey⁴ has also been carried out continentally showing that a predominant majority (79% average) of respondents in Africa would take a COVID-19 vaccine if it were deemed safe and effective. However, there are clear discrepancies between this survey and views expressed by many Africans in public forums such as social media, opinion pieces, etc.
7. Despite these commendable advancements, there is still the obvious insufficiency of doses and financing challenges associated with adequately vaccinating a great percentage of Africa's 1.3 billion citizens. Assuming two doses per person, at least 15 billion USD is estimated to purchase enough doses. In addition to addressing the lack of sufficient vaccines and financing constraints, the acceptance of vaccine(s) developed outside of the continent, as well as the collective formulation of African solutions to address common challenges presented in the successful acquisition, transportation, delivery and administration of the vaccines at all levels (community, national, regional, continental) is crucial and also needs to be addressed.
8. It is believed that the aforementioned Development and Access Strategy was prepared to help address such challenges while also ensuring long term resolutions to the pandemic as a whole. The strategy is comprised of three pillars:
 - 8.1. Vaccine development (focusing on the inevitable reality that Africa must take part in the development by having African institutions actively developing potential vaccines, conducting clinical trials at valid sites and ensuring that the analysis of vaccinated candidates takes place effectively). There is an existing consortium aimed supporting this effort.
 - 8.2. Access to vaccines (ensuring that there is unrestricted access to potential and existing legitimate vaccines that are cleared)
 - 8.3. Delivery of vaccines (building capacity for the efficient storage and transfer of vaccines from their acquisition and/or development to the actual vaccination of African citizens)

² <https://africacdc.org/news-item/amsp-opens-COVID-19-vaccines-pre-orders-for-55-african-union-member-states/>

³ <https://www.who.int/news/item/18-12-2020-covax-announces-additional-deals-to-access-promising-COVID-19-vaccine-candidates-plans-global-rollout-starting-q1-2021>

⁴ <https://africacdc.org/news-item/majority-of-africans-would-take-a-safe-and-effective-COVID-19-vaccine/>

9. There is still a lot of work to be done in the effective implementation of this Development and Access Strategy and to address the urgent challenges we are facing, namely to overcome the scramble for the acquisition of approved vaccines as well as the delivery of a holistic vaccination plan. Accordingly, a series of questions remain to be answered on how to ensure the effective and coherent implementation of an African response to the COVID-19 pandemic in general, and our own strategy at continental, regional, national and community levels in particular. The answers to these questions should address existing challenges and concerns which have been expressed on the best ways to concretely evaluate the solutions proposed by Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa-CDC). It is in view of contending with these questions that AU, Africa-CDC, AfDB, AFREXIMBANK and CoDA agreed to co-organize a series of virtual dialogues at this crucial time.
10. Beyond the expected outcome of improved public safety and potential herd immunity to be brought on by the vaccine, there is also the need to think beyond the pandemic and look to the development of Africans in a post-COVID era. Vulnerable groups which faced economic and social challenges prior to the pandemic will need to be particularly catered for in the midst of a scramble by all countries for their full economic recovery. In particular, the youth on the continent and their empowerment which encompasses their financial, social and physical well-being should not be overlooked. Addressing this for the post-COVID era will be one of the themes of the dialogues.
11. The conversations will cover all relevant areas of the African Development and Access Strategy and aim at proposing consensual solutions that are actionable with immediate and long term effects, as well as dedicating direct support (technical, financial and otherwise) to their successful implementation at all levels. In addition to this, it will propose valid and actionable policies for the protection and advancement of Africa's youth following a continental management of the pandemic.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

12. The main objective of these 'Virtual Dialogues on Africa's Response to COVID-19 and Equitable Access to Accepted Vaccine' is to bring a wide range of African stakeholders including Policy Makers, Youth Representatives, Faith Leaders, Community Leaders, Private Sector Representatives, and leading Health Experts together to discuss and contribute to the effective implementation of the African Union Development and Access Strategy overall and the work of Africa-CDC in particular.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

13. The Virtual Dialogues will enhance relevant stakeholders' participation and support in the implementation processes of the continental COVID-19 strategy by enabling/addressing the following;
 - 13.1. discussions on the existing strategy and determination of whether the COVID-19 Vaccine Development and Access Strategy is fit for purpose;
 - 13.2. identifying the overall and specific challenges of implementing this strategy
 - 13.3. achieve a common understanding of the role and work of Africa-CDC;
 - 13.4. Increase the participation and support of African citizens in the continental vaccine development and vaccination related processes.
 - 13.5. Improve the preparedness of AU Member States to address youth development following the pandemic.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

14. The Virtual Dialogues will potentially bring about:
 - 14.1. a collaborative space for African stakeholders - individuals and groups who would be willing and able to support the necessary efforts by Africans to address challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic, including the development of vaccines and vaccination processes at any stage;
 - 14.2. improved multi-stakeholder support in the implementation of the continental strategy;
 - 14.3. greater visibility of and support to the Africa-CDC and its work.
 - 14.4. Declaration of actionable policies at the national and continental level aimed at youth empowerment.

DRAFT PROGRAMME AND AGENDA FOR VIRTUAL DIALOGUES

15. The two Virtual Dialogues will take place over a period of two days and each will last between two to three hours/day. Both pre-arranged sessions will be devoted to specific audiences including Youth, Faith and traditional Leaders, Scientists, Private Sector and Health Workers). Each session will have a moderator, a keynote speaker/presenter and up to five panelists who will speak to various aspects of their specified topic. This will then be followed by a moderated Q&A session.

PARTICIPATION

16. The Virtual Dialogues will attract at least 150 participants drawn from AU Member States, relevant community representatives, national, regional and continental institutions, African Business Support Organisations, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Senior Government Officials, African Health regulatory bodies, Health experts, Academics and Research Institutions as well as experts from African Union, Africa-CDC, CoDA, UNECA, AfDB, WHO, AFREXIMBANK, and other relevant Continental and Regional Development Bodies. The selection of participants will take equitable geographical representation, women and youth into consideration.



Virtual Dialogue Series

Africa's Response to COVID-19 and Equitable Access to Vaccines & Vaccination

This dialogue series will bring together African stakeholders including policy-makers, youth representatives, faith leaders, community leaders, private sector representatives, and public health experts to discuss equitable access to vaccines in Africa and implementation of the African Union COVID-19 vaccine development and access strategy.

19
April

1:30pm - 1:30pm GMT

EVENT 1

Building confidence in the African Response
(CONVERSATION WITH SCIENTISTS AND TRADITIONAL/FAITH LEADERS)

EVENT 2

Vaccination and the younger generation
of Africans

(CONVERSATION WITH YOUTH ASSOCIATIONS)

20
April

1:30pm - 3:30pm GMT

REGISTER

Click the link above to register
and get updates on these events.