

JOINT STATEMENT

LANDMARK AGREEMENTS WITH MAJOR LIQUID OXYGEN SUPPLIERS WILL HELP COUNTRIES INCREASE ACCESS TO OXYGEN DURING PANDEMIC

NEW YORK, AMSTERDAM, 16 June 2021 — The [Every Breath Counts Coalition](#) and the [Access to Medicine Foundation](#) welcomed yesterday's announcement by [Unitaid](#) and the [Clinton Health Access Initiative](#) (CHAI) of the first-ever agreements with the liquid oxygen industry to help low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) avoid the tragedy of further COVID-19 deaths from lack of access to oxygen.

Negotiated under the umbrella of the [Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator \(ACT-A\) Oxygen Emergency Taskforce](#),¹ the landmark agreements commit the world's two largest liquid oxygen suppliers - [Air Liquide](#) and [Linde](#) - to an unprecedented level of collaboration with taskforce members to help LMICs governments meet their rising needs for oxygen to treat the surge in COVID-19 patients.

The new agreements with manufacturers have the potential to unlock supplies of liquid oxygen for LMICs and fast-track delivery to countries in crisis, or on the verge, preventing another wave of oxygen-related deaths.²

"If we don't move fast we could see deaths at the scale we saw back in late April – when more than 15,000 people died every day, mainly in Asian and Latin American countries," warned Leith Greenslade, Coordinator of the Every Breath Counts Coalition.

"With hospitals in several African countries now reporting oxygen shortages and related deaths, it is a matter of urgency that these new liquid oxygen agreements are translated into real action on the ground," she added.

"We applaud these new commitments and the substantial progress on the creation of a coordinated framework. It is encouraging to see Air Liquide and Linde respond to our early calls for action to bring oxygen to more patients in LMICs. We hope this announcement will encourage more companies to help bridge the remaining gaps," said Jayasree Iyer, Executive Director of the Access to Medicine Foundation.

Both organizations are calling on LMICs governments with urgent oxygen needs to work with the taskforce and the companies to secure liquid supplies, prepare hospitals, and train staff to use the new equipment effectively and safely in record time.

They are also urging other industry leaders - liquid gas as well as plant and concentrator manufacturers - to join the global effort to strengthen LMIC health systems by increasing access to medical oxygen.

The pandemic has driven LMIC need for medical oxygen to 15 million cubic meters per day, the equivalent of two million large cylinders. The annual cost of meeting this level of need is estimated at \$US3 billion.³

¹ Members include Unitaid and Wellcome (co-chairs), WHO, UNICEF, Global Fund, World Bank, UNOPS, Every Breath Counts Coalition, CHAI, PATH, Save the Children, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, ELMA Philanthropies, and the Access to Medicine Foundation.

² See the 45 countries currently experiencing or at risk of oxygen shortages as of 13 June 2021 here: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EawG7nDVP1USdrPpJap0wA-3jpRdZZYduOsKI45tIpM/edit>

³ See the COVID-19 Oxygen Needs Tracker as of 15 June 2021 here: <https://www.path.org/programs/market-dynamics/covid-19-oxygen-needs-tracker/>

Since the taskforce was established in February 2021, \$US4 billion has been mobilized to meet LMIC oxygen and other diagnostic and treatment needs, subject to government demand and available oxygen supply.⁴

With G7 leaders signaling more support for the ACT-A partners working on oxygen, and by calling on the World Bank and other Multilateral Development Banks to act with greater speed on COVID-19 treatments, we are confident that lack of public sector financing is no longer a rate-limiting factor for effective public-private partnerships.⁵

The Every Breath Counts Coalition and Access to Medicine Foundation have consistently called for greater collaboration with the oxygen industry during the pandemic. They have co-hosted three Access to Medical Oxygen Roundtables (25 September 2020, 9 December 2020 and 9 June 2021) which culminated in a call for a strategic framework with time-bound execution to respond to the current pandemic and be better prepared for the next one.⁶

“The new agreements provide the strategic framework we have been waiting for. Now all parties must rally to execute so that history does not repeat itself,” Greenslade and Iyer said.

Investments in medical oxygen now will not only reduce the death toll from the pandemic, but will enable countries to keep saving the lives of many other patients, from newborns in respiratory distress; to children with pneumonia; women in child birth; elderly adults with chronic conditions; and patients needing surgery.

Oxygen truly is an essential medicine. Tragically, it took a pandemic to demonstrate to the world just how essential.

The independent [Access to Medicine Foundation](#) (est. 2003) stimulates and guides healthcare companies to do more for the people living in low- and middle-income countries without access to medicine. The Foundation unleashes the power of other stakeholders (e.g., investors, governments, private foundations and global health agencies) to motivate and guide companies to take action through a unique model of engagement, highlighting best practices, and bringing together like-minded people from industry, global health, public policy, and the investment community to create a culture of access to medicine.

The [Every Breath Counts Coalition](#) (est. 2017) is a public-private partnership representing United Nations and multilateral health agencies, donor governments and foundations, companies, non-government organizations (NGOs), and academic institutions, supporting low- and middle-income countries to reduce deaths from pneumonia, including from COVID-19. The coalition is committed to engaging the world’s leading suppliers of medical oxygen in the access to oxygen agenda in the context of COVID-19 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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⁴ Including \$US3.7 billion from the US, German, and Dutch Governments to the Global Fund, \$US182 million from the Government of Canada to UNICEF, and \$US20 million from Unitaid and Wellcome. This does not include the amounts invested in oxygen by the World Bank.

⁵ See the Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communiqué here <https://www.g7uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Carbis-Bay-G7-Summit-Communique-PDF-430KB-25-pages-1-1.pdf>

⁶ Reports of the Access to Medical Oxygen Roundtables are available [here](#) (September 2020), [here](#) (December 2020) and [here](#) (June 2021).