



# Taking Stock: COVID-19 vaccine financing, procurement and distribution in Africa

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## OPENING REMARKS

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- A warm welcome from Tshwane to all our distinguished participants. It is an honour to have 15 African governments in attendance, who are joined by a large contingent from UNICEF – always good to have a UN body contributing to such a critical policy and delivery challenge as the one we are covering today. I am also pleased that we have colleagues from the GATES Foundation, WHO, World Bank, African Development Bank, the Clinton Health Access Initiative and others. Taken together, we have 26 African countries present. Welcome everyone.
- Let me share some thoughts as a contribution to the framing of our dialogue.
- Since the first COVID-19 vaccine was administered in Africa, just about 8 months ago, less than 4 percent of the continent's 1.3 billion inhabitants have been fully vaccinated, this is in contrast to a world average of 30 percent. When we got together in April 2021 for a previous dialogue on this topic, there was general consensus that vaccination against COVID-19 was the single most important measure to mitigate against loss of lives and further economic disruption. It has been estimated that for every month without a vaccine, the African continent loses US\$13.8 billion in GDP (Reliefweb, 2021a).
- In April, before most countries had begun their vaccination programmes in earnest, we considered: (i) the early trends in budgeting for the vaccine across the continent; (ii) how ministries of finance and health can work together to ensure vaccination programmes are adequately covered in the budget; (iii) and how to ensure the different elements of the PFM system are sufficiently flexible and reliable to facilitate vaccine programme implementation. We also shared our collective knowledge of the: (i) costs and benefits of different financing options; (ii) how procurement can be undertaken in an emergency – and still ensure efficiency and

accountability; and (iii) how countries can cost the roll-out, utilise the private sector and NPOs, and ensure funds flow efficiently to service-delivery centres. Suffice to say – the April dialogue was jam packed.

- If we are to rapidly scale-up COVID-19 vaccine programmes in Africa, we will require sustained collaboration between health and finance officials in planning, budgeting, and implementation.
- Political commitment and domestic resourcing will also be crucial. Dr. Phionah Atuhebwe from W.H.O reminds us – when the Republic of Cote d’Ivoire applied to receive vaccines from COVAX that require ultra-cold storage, the government was willing to send the presidential jet to fetch the kit. She says that this is the kind of commitment our countries need. It is also a good use of a presidential jet.
- Recognition of the importance of this is what brings us here today. During this peer-learning and exchange event, we will provide for health finance experts and practitioners from 26 African countries to (i) critically reflect on the current state of their COVID-19 vaccine programmes and the effectiveness of collaboration between the ministry of finance and health; and (ii) learn from peer countries and experts about financing requirements for the vaccine, procurement and distribution successes and challenges, and how vaccination programmes have been funded from domestic resources.
- If I was to frame today’s dialogue it will be through the following three questions:
  - What funds and financing are required for the COVID-19 vaccine programmes?
  - How do we improve efficiency, especially in the procurement and distribution of the vaccine? and a question that is pertinent for Africa ...
  - What are the arguments for and against prioritising the COVID-19 vaccine against competing needs and within increasingly constrained fiscal environments?
- Finally, I encourage you to actively share your perspectives with your peers from other countries. While our country contexts may differ, we are facing a common threat - sharing challenges and possible solutions will be invaluable. It will also facilitate the development of a more collaborative

Africa-wide approach in most cost-effectively procuring the COVID-19 vaccine and eradicating the virus in Africa and globally.

- Thank you.