

Nigeria receives nearly 4 million vaccines from COVAX

2 March 2021, by Carley Petesch



Raimonde Goudou Coffie, culture minister, receives a shot of the AstraZeneca vaccine in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, Monday March 1, 2021. Ivory Coast is the second country in the world after Ghana to receive vaccines acquired through the United Nations-backed COVAX initiative with a delivery of 504,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine made by the Serum Institute of India. (AP Photo/ Diomande Ble Blonde)

Nearly 4 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have arrived in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, the third and largest delivery so far to an African country by the global COVAX initiative, which was created to ensure that low- and middle-income countries have fair access to vaccines.

The COVAX program shipped 3.94 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, from Mumbai to Abuja, according to a joint statement from UNICEF, which is working in partnership with the World Health Organization, GAVI, which is an international vaccine alliance, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation, with more than 200 million residents, and it recently

experienced a surge of COVID-19 cases. As of Tuesday the West African nation has recorded a cumulative total of 156,017 cases, including 1,915 deaths.

Tuesday's delivery is part of a first wave of vaccines arriving in Nigeria that will continue in the coming days and weeks, the statement said.

"After a year of disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, today we celebrate the efforts being made in getting the vaccine to Nigeria. With more than 150,000 Nigerians infected with the virus and over 1,800 lives lost, the path to recovery for the people of Nigeria can finally begin," said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Nigeria Country Representative. "This is a very significant occasion—the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines into Nigeria is critical in curbing the pandemic. The only way out of this crisis is to ensure that vaccinations are available to all."

The COVAX program is expected to deliver around 90 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to Africa in the first quarter of 2021, in the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history, according to the World Health Organization and UNICEF. Nigeria is among 92 countries worldwide that will receive vaccines for free through the COVAX initiative. Another 90 countries and eight territories have agreed to pay for doses.

The COVAX initiative, however, has been hampered by the severely limited global supply of doses as well as logistical problems that delayed the global distribution of the vaccines. The long-awaited program has fallen short of hopes it would quickly ensure vaccines to the world's most vulnerable people.

Ghana begins its vaccination campaign Tuesday, after being the first country to receive COVAX vaccines last week with a delivery of 600,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Its inoculation campaign from March 2 to 15 will take place in 43

districts that are the epicenter of the pandemic there.

Ivory Coast, which received 504,000 doses last week, began giving shots Monday in the commercial capital Abidjan.

"This is a landmark moment for the country and the COVAX facility's mission to help end the acute phase of the pandemic by enabling equitable access to these vaccines across the world. We are glad to see Nigeria is amongst the first receiving the doses from COVAX," said Thabani Maphosa, managing director for country programs at Gavi, the [vaccine](#) alliance.

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