

# Ivory Coast begins its vaccination campaign with COVAX doses

March 1 2021, by Toussaint N'gotta

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Youssouf Kouyate, National Police General Director, 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)

Ivory Coast has begun giving shots to inoculate against COVID-19 with vaccines delivered last week by the global COVAX initiative, which was created to ensure that low- and middle-income countries have fair access to doses.

The West African country's mass vaccination campaign started Monday with jabs being given to health workers, teachers, and members of the armed forces at the Treichville Sports Palace in the commercial capital, Abidjan, where 95% of the country's cases have been recorded, according to the health ministry.

The drive is using 504,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine made by the Serum Institute of India. Some 24 other African countries are expected to start receiving vaccines via COVAX this week in what is the world's largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history, according to WHO and UNICEF.

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.

Ivory Coast's Health Minister Eugène Aka Aouélé said the first phase of the campaign will target more than 250,000 people. He said the nation aims to vaccinate more than 5.6 million people, or 20% of the population.

Like many African countries, Ivory Coast recently battled a resurgence of the pandemic that saw increased cases and hospitalizations. It has recorded 32,754 cases and 192 deaths since its first case was recorded on March 11, 2020, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention figures.

The resurgence is now declining, as the 7-day rolling average of daily

new cases in Ivory Coast has dropped over the past two weeks, going from 0.71 new cases per 100,000 people on Feb. 14 to 0.39 new cases per 100,000 people on Feb. 28, [according to figures from Johns Hopkins University](#).

As Ivory Coast's inoculation campaign begins, health authorities are encouraging people to participate in the voluntary program.

"I reassure people that the vaccine in Ivory Coast is safe," Director General of Health Mamadou Samba said Sunday on national television. "There is no doubt about the quality of the vaccines the Ivory Coast has received. There is a committee within us which takes care of this."

Ivory Coast is among 92 countries that will receive vaccines for free through the COVAX initiative, which is led by the WHO; Gavi, a vaccine group; and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. Another 90 countries and eight territories have agreed to pay for doses.

The neighboring country of Ghana is slated to begin its vaccination campaign Tuesday or Wednesday, after being the first country to receive COVAX vaccines last week with a delivery of 600,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Ghana's President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and his wife got the first jabs Monday to assure the public of the safety of the vaccines.

"There are still some who continue to express doubts about the vaccine, others have expressed reservations about its efficacy, with some taking sides with conspiracy theorists who believe the vaccine has been created to wipe out the African race," he said, in a nation-wide broadcast Sunday night. "Taking the vaccine will not alter your DNA, it will not embed a tracking device in your body, neither will it cause infertility in women or in men."

He said Ghana's Food and Drug Administration would not approve the vaccines for use if it had any reservations about its safety, adding that, "no vaccine will be deployed in the country for use without the express certification of the FDA."

Ghana's campaign from March 2 to 15 will take place in 43 districts that are the epicenter of the pandemic there.

Ghanaians have mixed reactions to the vaccine.

Adwoa Bio, an unemployed graduate told AP, she wants to see Ghana's leaders get the vaccines first.

"I am torn between trusting that it would save me from coronavirus or going along with my parents who have said they will not get vaccinated," she said. She complained about the late arrival of the vaccines which could have saved the lives of many people who have died.

"It is true that vaccines have helped mankind in the past but, it looks like there have been a lot of conspiracy theories against the vaccines for COVID-19 and the government would have to really put in place a public education program to change the mindset of the people, otherwise, many people will run away from it."

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