In Uganda, remote islands test delivery of COVID-19 vaccines

April 30 2021

A nurse administers the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to a woman at the Butanda Health Centre III in Western Uganda, Tuesday, April 27, 2021. The Uganda government has embarked on vaccinating people in hard to reach areas. Remote islands in Uganda have tested the efforts of health officials delivering COVID-19 vaccine doses as global efforts to access hard-to-reach areas continue. (AP Photo/Patrick Onen)

Remote islands in Uganda have tested the efforts of health officials delivering COVID-19 vaccine doses as global efforts to access hard-to-reach areas continue.

On a recent day Edward Arineitwe, assistant district health officer for Kabale district, sat in a motor boat with his hands folded on top of a cooler carrying doses of the vaccine. The boat puttered across Lake Bunyonyi, Africa's second deepest lake, in western Uganda into an area dotted with islands that are home to some 2,500 people.

The COVID-19 pandemic has complicated life for island residents who rely on tourism as a major source of income.

Due to the area's remoteness, many residents had not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19. And a UNICEF spokeswoman, Catherine Ntabade, said funds had not been available for vaccination workers to travel to and from the islands until now.

Some 300 people received vaccine doses on the first day of the drive. The goal is to reach 1,000 of the islands' most vulnerable residents.

Uganda started its coronavirus vaccination campaign in mid-March, targeting more than 20 million people at the highest risk of infection including health workers, teachers, the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions.

More than 300,000 Ugandans have received the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine. But vaccine hesitancy among some people remains a hurdle on top of the logistical ones.

A nurse prepares the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at the Butanda Health Centre III in Western Uganda, Tuesday, April 27, 2021. The Uganda government has embarked on vaccinating people in hard to reach areas. Remote islands in Uganda have tested the efforts of health officials delivering COVID-19 vaccine doses as global efforts to access hard-to-reach areas continue. (AP Photo/Patrick Onen)

A woman waits for the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at the Butanda Health Centre III in Western Uganda, Tuesday, April 27, 2021. The Uganda government has embarked on vaccinating people in hard to reach areas. Remote islands in Uganda have tested the efforts of health officials delivering COVID-19 vaccine doses as global efforts to access hard-to-reach areas continue. (AP Photo/Patrick Onen)

A couple wait for the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at the Butanda Health Centre III in Western Uganda, Tuesday, April 27, 2021. The Uganda government has embarked on vaccinating people in hard to reach areas. Remote islands in Uganda have tested the efforts of health officials delivering COVID-19 vaccine doses as global efforts to access hard-to-reach areas continue. (AP Photo/Patrick Onen)

A nurse prepares to administer the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to a man at the Bwama Health Centre III in Western Uganda, Wednesday April 28, 2021. Uganda government has embarked on vaccinating people in hard to reach areas., Remote islands in Uganda have tested the efforts of health officials delivering COVID-19 vaccine doses as global efforts to access hard-to-reach areas continue. (AP Photo/Patrick Onen)

An elderly woman and her daughter leave the Bwama Health Centre III, at Bwama Island – Lake Bunyonyi, in Western Uganda, Wednesday, April 28, 2021, after receiving her COVID-19 vaccination. The Uganda government has embarked on vaccinating people in hard to reach areas. Remote islands in Uganda have tested the efforts of health officials delivering COVID-19 vaccine doses as global efforts to access hard-to-reach areas continue. (AP Photo/Patrick Onen)

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Citation: In Uganda, remote islands test delivery of COVID-19 vaccines (2021, April 30) retrieved 6 May 2024 from

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