

Vaccines to Africa must have good shelf lives, says expert

January 20 2022, by Chinedu Asadu



A nurse prepares to administer an AstraZeneca vaccination against COVID-19, at a district health center giving first, second, and booster doses to eligible people, in the low-income Kibera neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022. At least 2.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines donated to African countries have expired, the Africa Centers for Disease Control said Thursday, citing short shelf lives as the major reason. Credit: AP Photo/Brian Inganga

At least 2.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines donated to African countries have expired, the Africa Centers for Disease Control said Thursday, citing short shelf lives as the major reason.

Donors of vaccines to the continent should send them with a realistic shelf life of about "three months to six months" before their expiration, Africa CDC director John Nkengasong told an online briefing. More African nations are now refusing to accept donations of vaccines that have only one or two months before their expiration, he said.

Although the number of expired doses is only about 0.5% of the total number donated to Africa, Nkengasong said he is unhappy to see any become invalid.

"Any dose of vaccine that expired pains me because that is a life that can potentially be saved," Nkengasong said.

Just over 10% of Africa's population of 1.3 billion people are fully vaccinated, he said. The continent's 54 countries have confirmed 10.4 million COVID-19 cases and 235,000 deaths. The continent's omicron wave appears to be receding, with new confirmed cases down by 20% from the previous week and deaths dropping by 8%, the World Health Organization's Africa office announced Thursday.

More than 60% of the 572 million [vaccine](#) doses African countries have received have already been administered, Nkengasong said. The "big fight" for African countries will be "logistics and getting doses to the population even as more supplies arrive," he said.



A man receives an AstraZeneca vaccination against COVID-19, at a district health center giving first, second, and booster doses to eligible people, in the low-income Kibera neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022. At least 2.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines donated to African countries have expired, the Africa Centers for Disease Control said Thursday, citing short shelf lives as the major reason. Credit: AP Photo/Brian Inganga

"We've seen remarkable uptake of vaccines in settings where we engage the community ... and [religious leaders](#)," Nkengasong said, urging countries to use innovative ways to "bring vaccines to the population and not only require that the populations should go to where the vaccines are."

In Nigeria, for instance, an increasing number of vaccination centers are

being set at public facilities such as markets and motor parks and [health authorities](#) are collaborating with opinion leaders to fight hesitancy.

Vaccines are Africa's "best defense" against severe illness, death and overwhelmed health systems, Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO Africa director said at another online briefing Thursday.

"Africa must not only broaden vaccinations but also gain increased and equitable access to critical COVID-19 therapeutics to save lives and effectively combat this pandemic," Moeti said. "The deep inequity that left Africa at the back of the queue for vaccines must not be repeated with life-saving treatments."



A nurse administers an AstraZeneca vaccination against COVID-19, at a district health center giving first, second, and booster doses to eligible people, in the low-

income Kibera neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022. At least 2.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines donated to African countries have expired, the Africa Centers for Disease Control said Thursday, citing short shelf lives as the major reason. Credit: AP Photo/Brian Inganga



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A woman receives an AstraZeneca vaccination against COVID-19, at a district health center giving first, second, and booster doses to eligible people, in the low-income Kibera neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022. At least 2.8 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines donated to African countries have expired, the Africa Centers for Disease Control said Thursday, citing short shelf lives as the major reason. Credit: AP Photo/Brian Inganga

In 2022, more testing is needed to fight the pandemic, said Harley Feldbaum of the Global Fund.

"We need to bring testing and treatment together in a much more rapid fashion," said Feldbaum. "As long as we allow the pandemic to continue and to have inequitable access to tools, vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics, new variants are likely to rise, more people are likely to die

than are needed to and the health systems overall are more likely to be undermined."

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Citation: Vaccines to Africa must have good shelf lives, says expert (2022, January 20) retrieved 4 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-01-vaccines-africa-good-shelf-expert.html>

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