



National Oxygen Scale-Up Framework Meeting: Road to Oxygen Access

(May 2024)

Concept note

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Background

The mission of WHO's Health Emergencies Programme is to build the capacity of Member States to manage health emergency risks and, when national capacities are overwhelmed, to lead and coordinate the international health response to contain outbreaks and to provide effective relief and recovery to affected populations. The objectives of the Country Readiness Strengthening (CRS) Department include the development and strengthening of core national capacities necessary to mitigate and respond to emergency risks and vulnerabilities.

Within the CRS Department, the Clinical Management and Operations Unit works to facilitate the development and implementation of clinical standards across health emergencies. This is done through the coordination of clinical expert networks and by accelerating the development of norms and standards, facilitating innovation and research, and supporting Member States in readiness and response activities.

Oxygen is a life-saving medicine (see the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines¹) and used for the treatment of many acute, severe and chronic conditions. Despite its importance, medicinal oxygen remains a limited resource in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as well as in some upper-middle and high-income countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted these inequities and prioritized investment in oxygen systems.

In February 2021, under the auspices of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), Unitaid convened the Oxygen Emergency Taskforce² together with WHO and other partners to assess oxygen needs in LMICs, support and review funding requests, procure oxygen and related products and services, increase access to liquid oxygen, plant repairs and parts, and strengthen advocacy and communication on the importance of medical oxygen and available financing.

Between January 2020 and March 2023, a total of US\$ 410.7 million of the nearly US\$ 1 billion invested and allocated was spent in procuring biomedical supplies and large-scale oxygen production plants by the ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce and the United Nations Supply Chain Task Force (see figure below). These investments include the procurement of 247 pressure swing adsorption oxygen generating plants across 55 countries.

One of the key initiatives set out through the Oxygen Emergency Taskforce, and its successor initiative, the Global Oxygen Alliance (launched during the 76th World Health Assembly in May 2023), will support countries to identify needs and develop strategic national oxygen roadmaps. This is also reflected in the resolution "Increasing access to medical oxygen"³ adopted at the 76th World Health Assembly.

¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-MHP-HPS-EML-2023.02>

² Chaired by Unitaid, the Access to COVID-19 Tools - Accelerator Oxygen Emergency Taskforce includes: WHO (and the broader biomedical consortium WHO coordinates), Access to Medicine Foundation, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Clinton Health Access Initiative; Every Breath Counts Coalition, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; International Medical Corps; Save the Children, Pan American Health Organization; Program for Appropriate Technology in Health; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; United Nations Children's Fund; UN Office for Project Services; Unitaid; United States Agency for International Development; and the World Bank.

³ Increasing access to medical oxygen: https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB152/B152_CONF4-en.pdf

The **National Oxygen Scale-Up Framework Meeting: Road to Oxygen Access** will take place in Q2 of 2024 (14 – 16 May) convening Member States and implementation partners to develop an easy-to-use template to support Member States to develop and operationalize national oxygen scale-up plans. The intention of the meeting is not to duplicate work that has already been done; rather, to leverage understanding of what some countries are already doing to create a comprehensive and adaptable template that can be used in settings where oxygen has not already been fully included within broader health system planning. **This will also include learning from and incorporating, where relevant, resources that have already been made publicly available by WHO and other agencies.** This is a necessary step in ensuring sustainability for oxygen investments and to capitalize on the momentum seen during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meeting objective

The objective of this meeting is to bring together stakeholders to focus on lessons learned regarding the development and implementation of a national oxygen plan, including recommendations on how to overcome key challenges countries face when adopting a model to enhance their oxygen grid; sharing examples of established oxygen plans/plan archetypes; and an indicative template – which includes a minimum baseline of standard components of a functional oxygen grid/plan – that can then be tailored to country-specific contexts and finalized on that basis by a set date, e.g. commitment to do so (with partner support as needed). Clear next steps will be presented at the end of the meeting to finalize, disseminate and implement the template as well as to ensure that roadmaps are transitioned into costed plans that can be operationalized and monitored.

Concept

In advance of the **National Oxygen Scale-Up Framework Meeting: Road to Oxygen Access**, a scoping review will be carried out to understand the work that has already been done by and in support of Member States. From the scoping review, a draft template will be created outlining the critical components of a national oxygen scale-up plan. This template will serve as version 0, which will be modified and built out during the meeting in plenary and breakout sessions.

- Day 1 of the meeting will focus on discussing the draft template and the components needed to develop a national oxygen scale-up plan through information sessions led by technical experts and interactive panel sessions with representatives of Member States and implementing partners.
- Day 2 will consist of breakout sessions organized by template component and focused on modifying and building out each of these components through debate and consensus building.
- On Day 3 an updated template will be presented, and clear next steps will be agreed upon for its use and implementation.

Participants

Participation will be open to Member States from LMICs and selected small island developing states, global oxygen stakeholders, including nongovernment organizations, donor agencies, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and additional bodies as appropriate. This will include countries that have already developed roadmaps with an eye towards learning from their experiences when developing tools. Communication with Member States will be via WHO regional and country offices. The meeting will be hybrid, with in-person and remote participation, with each Member State invited to send one participant to attend in-person and with the opportunity for an additional participant to join virtually.

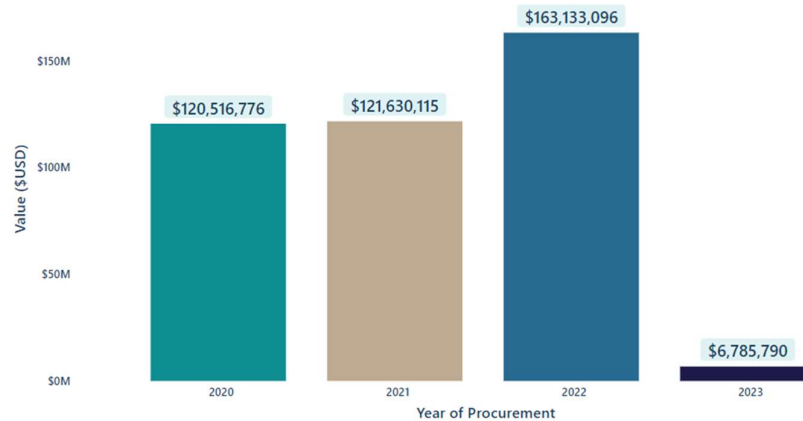
Funding and logistics

The meeting will be funded by Unitaid, the current convener of the former ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce, now transitioned to the Global Oxygen Alliance. WHO will fund the travel and participation of one participant per Member State. WHO headquarters will work with the WHO Travel Office on the logistics, including invitation letters, additional visa support and conferencing logistics.

ACT-A Oxygen Emergency Taskforce procurement

January 2020 – March 2023: \$US 410.10 million to 154 countries

Amount Spent on Procurement of Medical Equipment by Year



Amount Spent on Procurement of Medical Equipment by Product Category

