

Guatemala joins UK-Mexico seminar to discuss access to COVID-19 vaccines

The event, co-hosted by the two countries, highlighted the importance of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator to ensure global access to vaccines, treatments and tests to face COVID-19.

Representatives of Latin American and Caribbean countries, including Guatemala's Ministries of Health, and Foreign Affairs, and leaders from multilateral organisations, such as the Central American Bank of Economic Integration –CABEI-, highlighted the need for collaboration between governments, international institutions and businesses.

Officials from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO), alongside senior policymakers and scientists from across the region, presented their views on the COVID-19 pandemic and access to vaccines.

Finding a coronavirus vaccine and supporting equitable access to it, including for Latin America and the Caribbean countries, is a priority for the UK Government. The UK is collaborating with the international community to support the rapid development and manufacturing of safe, effective vaccines as well as treatments and tests to ensure widespread global access.

The UK has already committed up to £313 million of UKAID to support research and development for vaccines, treatments and tests to ensure new tools are available to all, including the world's poorest countries. The UK also co-hosted June's Global Vaccine Summit, which mobilised US\$8.8bn to replenish Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Gavi's work in the poorest countries is critical to sustaining immunisation coverage and bolstering the resilience of primary health care systems needed to tackle COVID-19. In recent days, a study revealed the promising results of the Oxford University vaccine Phase I/II trials, one of a number of projects supported by the UK Government.

In Guatemala, and as soon as the pandemic exploded, the UK invested in several projects aimed at tackling the impact of the COVID-19. Special assistance is provided to: 1) helping indigenous communities in Solola to cover some of their basic food needs, 2) training women leaders on health issues in Quiche, Huehuetenango and Alta Verapaz, and 3) working with Agexport to encourage municipalities to develop and implement covid protocols and economic reactivation.

UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

In order to end this terrible pandemic and kick-start our global recovery, we must make vaccines, treatments and tests accessible for all, from Britain to Brazil, Ethiopia to Ecuador, Turkey to Trinidad and Tobago, and everywhere in-between.

This crisis has challenged us like never before. But it has also shown the profound importance of international collaboration. Only by working together can we defeat this virus and build back stronger and better than ever.

Mexico Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard said:

Mexico seeks to bring the governments of Latin America and the Caribbean closer to the leading multilateral institutions in the strategy for the development and distribution of the vaccine against COVID-19, in order to guarantee equitable access. We appreciate the support of the UK in opening spaces for dialogue and building inclusive responses to global problems.

Notes to editors

- The virtual seminar consisted of three panels: The End-to-End Offer on Global Vaccine Access, including the participation of GAVI and CEPI, Self-Financing for Vaccine Access (with the IFC of the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank), and Policy and Allocation of Vaccine (with the Pan-American Health Organisation).
- The UK is one of the biggest global donors on COVID-19 to date, pledging a total of £774m of UK aid that is helping to stop the spread of COVID-19, find new vaccines, treatments and tests and save lives around the world.
- On 4 June, the UK hosted the Global Vaccine Summit, raising US\$ 8.8 billion from 32 donor governments and 12 foundations, corporations and organisations. This will immunise a further 300m children by 2025, saving up to 8 million lives and supporting the global fight against COVID-19.
- On 4 May, the UK successfully co-hosted the Global Coronavirus Response Initiative, raising \$8 billion for research and development on vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics.