

UK to work with African Union to slow spread of coronavirus in Africa

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- £20 million to help African response to coronavirus
- Support to help train African health experts to tackle pandemic in Africa

The UK will invest up to £20 million in the African Union's new 'African Union Covid19 Response Fund' to tackle coronavirus and save lives.

This makes the UK the largest national donor to the fund, which was announced by Cyril Ramaphosa, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) and President of the Republic of South Africa last month. It will support African leaders and technical experts to slow the spread of coronavirus and save lives in Africa and worldwide.

The fund will tackle the pandemic by recruiting African health experts and deploying them where they are needed most, strengthening global tracking of the pandemic, combatting potentially harmful misinformation, providing specialist coronavirus training for health workers and making information about the virus more accessible to the public.

Announcing the funding today, International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

"As the UK faces its biggest peacetime challenge in tackling coronavirus, it's never been more important to work with our partners in Africa to fight disease.

"No one is safe until we are all safe and this new funding and support for African leadership will help protect us all – in the UK, Africa and around the world – from further spread of the virus."

The announcement follows calls between Minister for Africa James Duddridge, AU Commissioner for Trade and Industry Albert Muchanga and AU Commissioner for Social Affairs Amira El-Fadil in which they discussed the risks Africa faces from the pandemic and how the UK is working with partners on the continent to tackle these shared global issues.

This new support for the African Union comes after the UK has already pledged over \$900 million to the international fight against coronavirus. The UK is also using its existing aid programmes to help vulnerable countries in Africa to strengthen their health systems. It also comes ahead of the UK hosting the virtual Global Vaccine Summit on 4th June, to secure future funding for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which has already saved the lives of millions of children in Africa from infectious diseases

Many countries on the continent are beginning to see exponential increases in

coronavirus case numbers, presenting a severe risk to fragile healthcare systems. The high prevalence of HIV, malnutrition and other illnesses in parts of Africa may also worsen the impact of the virus. In sub-Saharan Africa, there are on average just 2 doctors for every 10,000 people, compared to 28 per 10,000 in the UK.

If healthcare systems become overwhelmed, the worldwide spread of the virus will be difficult to slow, risking new waves of infection. The UK's contribution to the Covid19 Response Fund will prevent this by working in partnership with the AU to help fight the virus, strengthen healthcare systems and save lives in the AU's 55 member states.

Today's announcement brings the total UK aid contribution to fighting coronavirus to up to £764 million (\$935.6 million). This money is helping to find a vaccine, providing vital humanitarian relief, feeding the world's poorest people, strengthening global healthcare systems and managing the risk of a global economic downturn.

Notes to editors

- The contribution to the AU African Union Covid19 Response Fund will support the implementation of the AU's continental strategy to: (1) coordinate the efforts of AU member states and multilateral and international partners in responding to the outbreak in Africa; and (2) promote an evidence-based approach for surveillance, diagnosis, treatment and control of coronavirus in Africa.
- Aspects of the strategy supported by the fund will include: the recruitment and deployment of African experts, through Africa CDC's African Voluntary Health Corps (a roster of 800 skilled volunteers), tracking the outbreak through effective screening, contact tracing and information management; combatting misinformation; creating an online community of practice with weekly webinars for African clinicians; publishing technical guidelines in all AU languages; creating an Africa Taskforce for coronavirus to co-ordinate response activity, and convening AU member states to agree a continental response.
- The UN Economic Commission for Africa has warned that over 300,000 Africans could lose their lives due to coronavirus.