

Economic and Social Council

Establishing measures to ensure vaccination in LEDCs



Forum	Economic and Social Council
Issue:	Establishing measures to ensure vaccination in LEDCs
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Introduction

“Rich nations [are] vaccinating one person every second, while [the] majority of the poorest nations are yet to give a single dose.”

Vaccination production and distribution are being controlled by major pharmaceutical corporations, who hold a monopoly over the industry. They have control over the price and are therefore not making them economically accessible for less economically developed countries (LEDCs). Over 75% of vaccinations have been administered within just 10 countries whilst 130 LEDCs have not received a single dose (*Press*), with only 1% of people in these countries having received 1 dose (*Padma*).

The People’s Vaccine Alliance sent out an international warning about the critical shortages in medical equipment in developing countries, however the waivers granting pharmaceutical companies these rights are yet to be waived.

It is suspected that without immediate interventions, certain nations including South Africa and Malawi may end up in a similar situation to the early 2000s where pharmaceutical companies held monopolies over the HIV treatments and priced them for up to \$10,000 per year. These previous monopolies were overruled, ensuring treatment was available at economically accessible prices, which was predicted to have saved millions of lives. (*“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”*). Yet that has not happened for the current crisis, and its is contributing to the widening inequality gap.



Definition of Key Terms

Less economically developed countries (LEDCs)

LEDCs are low-income countries with a low quality of life and structural barriers to industrialization and sustainability. (*“Least Developed Countries (LDCs) | Economic Analysis & Policy Division”*)

More economically developed countries (MEDCs)

High-income countries with a high quality of life and advanced technological infrastructure. (*Wikipedia Contributors*)

Monopoly

A dominating firm in an industry, producing and selling a unique product with no close substitutes, that has significant control over price. The barriers to entry for other firms are high due to legislation and patents.

World Health Organization

An agency of the United Nations (UN) that is responsible for international public health. (*World Health Organization*)

General Overview

More economically developed countries (MEDCs) such as the United Kingdom, United States and several nations in the European Union exercised their economic power by blocking a proposal which was due to be discussed at the World Trade Organization (WTO) on 10th March 2021. It was proposed by over 100 developing countries, led by South Africa and India, aiming to waive the monopolies possessed by pharmaceutical countries that prevent the mass production of vaccines in order to allow LEDCs access to effective vaccinations quickly and efficiently to the quantities being transported by the World Health Organization (WHO) were only sufficient for a maximum of 20% of people in these poorer nations to be vaccinated by the end of 2021.

Campaigning organizations have also acted by releasing calls and petitions to waive the rights of production held by pharmaceutical corporations who are using the COVID vaccines for



personal profit rather than for overall social benefit. Additionally, there have been protests led by activists and advocates.

There are many qualified vaccine producers globally who can contribute to the upscale production of COVID vaccines required, once granted access to the technology that the monopoly companies are not releasing. Most modern factories would have the ability to produce safely and efficiently within 3-4 months with access to this required technology. This would lead the world into a state of economic recovery due to the easing of COVID safety measures on a large scale. (*“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”*)

Immediate action must be taken to waive the rights that pharmaceutical companies have over the production and rolling out of COVID vaccines, as this can result in a significant upscale in production and the market forces of supply and demand will bring the prices down to an affordable rate that LEDCs can afford to invest in. Additionally, the access to vaccinations, both economically and physically, will exponentially increase, ensuring the maximum measures are taken to mitigate the spread of the virus on a global level.

Major Parties Involved

Major Pharmaceutical Companies

They hold a monopoly over the industry and have complete control over distribution and price. They hold these rights due to patents and if these were waived, production could exponentially increase, and price would decrease.

India and South Africa

These countries lead the waiver for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) at the WTO which calls to eliminate intellectual property including legal barriers and patents that grant pharmaceutical companies this power to expand production to a greater variety of countries and manufacturers. Intellectual property rights are granted on the condition that they serve public interest, which these countries are arguing is not the case. Whilst some MEDCs blocked this



proposal, it is scheduled to be re-proposed. . (*“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”*)

European Union, United Kingdom and United States

These nations were responsible for blocking the TRIPS proposal at WTO, disregarding the possibility for more companies and organizations to produce and distribute vaccinations at a faster rate in more locations. (*“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”*)

People’s Vaccine Alliance

This was formed from a group of campaigning organizations including Oxfam, Frontline, AIDS, UNAIDS, Global Justice Now and the Yunus Centre. It released a call that was signed by over 1 million people in support of the motion for pharmaceutical companies to lose the rights of COVID vaccines. (*“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”*)

France

France was in support of the increase in production in LEDCs despite its continuation in defending the monopolies of pharmaceutical companies. (*“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”*)

World Health Organisation

The WHO has been working with UNICEF to finance and manufacture COVID vaccines, particularly for LEDCs, in the aim of warranting a fairer allocation across countries with more limited access. It is also part of an international initiative that intends to roll out 2 billion vaccination doses by December 2021. It has already begun its progress in providing to LEDCs, sending deliveries to West Africa from February 2021. (*Felter*)



Timeline of Key Events

(“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”)

(“Coronavirus Timeline | History of Vaccines”)

(Felter)

(“AstraZeneca: US to Share up to 60m Vaccine Doses”)

Date	Description of event
27 th December 2019	First confirmed COVID case
31 st December 2019	WHO issues public health alert
13 th January 2020	First international case detected in Thailand
30 th January 2020	Outbreak declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern
11 th March 2020	WHO declares outbreak as Global Pandemic
14 th June 2020	Initial trial of Moderna vaccine published
12 th August 2020	Initial trial of Pfizer vaccine published
8 th December 2020	First COVID vaccine administered in the UK
February 2021	WHO begin sending COVID vaccine doses to West Africa
March 2021	People’s Vaccine Alliance sends out warning that LEDCs are suffering critical medical shortages
10 th March 2021	India and South Africa repropose the TRIPS proposal at WTO for discussion
10 th -11 th March 2021	Proposal is not passed due to lack of consensus
May 2021	U.S. agree to donate 60,000,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine to Nepal
To Date	Pharmaceutical companies still hold the rights to the COVID vaccine





- Initiation of COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) to ensure access to vaccine in humanitarian emergencies. (*“Security Council Calls for Increased Global Cooperation to Facilitate COVID-19 Vaccine Access in Conflict Areas, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2565 (2021) | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases”*)
- Equitable Distribution of the COVID-19 Vaccine, 26th February 2020 (S/RES/2565).
- Global Ceasefire Appeal, fight against COVID-19, 1st July 2020 (S/RES/2532).
- The WHO and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) are working to distribute 2 billion vaccinations by the end of 2021. (*Felter*)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

- TRIPS proposal at WTO (unsuccessful) (*“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”*)
- Financing from the World Bank to grant access to vaccines for LEDCs (successful to the degree it can provide to) (*“COVAX and World Bank to Accelerate Vaccine Access for Developing Countries”*)
- People’s Vaccine Alliance campaigns (to gain more overall support for the motion to expand covid vaccination production). (*“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”*)
- People-led protests (a stunt to raise awareness rather than take direct action).
- Polls by YouGov exploring whether to share vaccine science with a wider range of manufacturers (successful in demonstrating the people’s opinion about waiving the intellectual property rights of major corporations). (*“Rich Nations Vaccinating One Person Every Second While Majority of the Poorest Nations Are yet to Give a Single Dose”*)
- In June, the leaders of the G7 group (an inter-governmental political forum involving Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US) made a deal to ensure 870 million extra doses reach LEDCs by the end of 2022 at a summit held in Cornwall. (A longer-term solution to help in replacement for their lack of support for the TRIPS proposal). (*“Consultations on Resolution 2565 on the Equitable Distribution of the COVID-19 Vaccine: What’s in Blue : Security Council Report”*)

Possible Solutions



- Social media campaigns to raise awareness about the lack of access to COVID vaccines in LEDCs and the socio-economic damage and consequences in the absence of action.
- United Nations nationwide funding campaign to invest further in the purchasing and delivery of additional doses to LEDCs.
- Recommendations by UN boards to participating members at WTO to accept the TRIPS proposal due to the campaigns and polls demonstrating the public support for intellectual property to be waived to demolish the monopoly held by major pharmaceutical companies.
- Urging more governments to donate remaining doses to countries in need in the absence of any change in the rights for expansion vaccine production.

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