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COVID Collaborative

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## **Laos, Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia Have Received Oral Antiviral Treatments for High-Risk Patients Through COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium**

### ***PAXLOVID™ rollout continues as international access to oral treatments improves***

**Washington, D.C. (16 March 2023)** — The COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium announced today that the governments of Zambia, Laos, Malawi and Rwanda have received shipments of PAXLOVID™ (nirmatrelvir/ritonavir), Pfizer's COVID-19 oral treatment. Partners involved in the Quick Start Consortium are supporting test-and-treat programs to improve access to antiviral treatments in low- and middle-income countries.

As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its fourth year, equitable access to vaccines to prevent serious illness, along with testing and oral treatments to help treat it, remains a challenge globally, leaving some low- and middle-income countries unprepared for potential surges. The Ministries of Health in these four countries are working with the Quick Start Consortium and other partners to set the stage for the introduction and scale-up of COVID-19 treatments, with the ultimate goal of establishing sustainable test-and-treat programs — an important building block of national healthcare systems — that provide testing and access to low-cost generic antivirals.

PAXLOVID™ and other antivirals have been available since late 2021, but access remains limited in many low- and middle-income countries around the world. Zambia was the first country to receive the treatment through the consortium, with an initial shipment of 1,000 courses of PAXLOVID™ reaching Lusaka in late December 2022 as part of a donation by Pfizer of 100,000 total courses to the Quick Start Consortium. Zambia received its second shipment on March 2nd.

"We appreciate the opportunity to be effectively prepared before we face another wave of COVID-19," said Dr. Viengsakhone Louangpradith, Deputy Director General of the Department of Healthcare and Rehabilitation, Lao PDR. "We are happy to continue our close collaboration with the consortium in ensuring we carry out and improve the country's COVID-19 strategy."

"We are eager to continue the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, and that entails strengthening our healthcare systems with the COVID-19 antivirals. Partnership remains important in our approach, and we appreciate the collaboration with the 'Quick Start Consortium' through COVID-19 drugs donation and the test-and-treat program implementation," said Professor Claude Mambo Muvunyi, the Director General of Rwanda Biomedical Centre. "Regardless of wealth or limited financial capacity, all patients deserve a return to good health. Only with this goal in mind can we successfully build a strong and resilient healthcare system."

Quick Start partner countries include Ghana, Kenya, Laos, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Arrangements for PAXLOVID™ donations to the remaining countries are currently being finalized.

“Too many countries still lack access to critical tools, like oral treatments, that hold promise to reduce hospitalizations and deaths from COVID-19,” said Dr. Krishna Udayakumar, Founding Director of the Duke Global Health Innovation Center and implementing partner of Quick Start. “We must strengthen the response to COVID-19 in every country; doing so lays the groundwork for building more robust and resilient health systems that can better handle future threats.”

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#### **About the COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium**

The COVID Treatment Quick Start Consortium brings together Duke University, the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), COVID Collaborative and Americares as implementing partners, with support from the Open Society Foundations, Pfizer and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The consortium works with national governments, multilateral agencies and bilateral donors to support COVID-19 test-and-treat demonstration programs in 10 low- and middle-income countries. <https://covidquickstart.org/>