

# The threat from infectious diseases

Ask the UK to support the development of new vaccines to end infectious disease threats.

As COVID-19 has shown, emerging infectious diseases are a huge threat to global health. They do not respect international borders and require a global response. Many low-and middle-income countries have suffered disproportionately from COVID-19. Infrastructure and health systems have been overwhelmed, access to vaccines and treatments have been impeded, and economies have suffered massively. The impact on global poverty is stark, with an estimated 119-124 million additional people pushed into extreme poverty in 2020.

In 2017, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) was created in the wake of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa that claimed 11,000 lives. CEPI is a partnership between public, private, philanthropic and civil society organisations, which aims to develop and deploy new vaccines to prevent future epidemics. When COVID-19 emerged in 2020, CEPI worked quickly to accelerate vaccine development, playing a big role in the development of safe and effective vaccines and the networks to enable their development, manufacture and distribution.

On 8 March, the UK Government will host a summit to raise \$3.5 billion for CEPI's work over the next 5 years, aiming to reduce the time for new vaccine development to 100 days, find vaccines for known diseases, and be ready for new ones. CEPI works to support low- and middle-income countries to develop vaccine manufacturing capacity. This month, please write to the Foreign Secretary Liz Truss MP and Health Secretary Sajid Javid MP, asking them to commit £60 million per year for 5 years to CEPI to help keep the world safe from infectious disease threats.

## The need to end infectious disease threats

The COVID-19 pandemic shows the huge threat that emerging infectious diseases can pose to global health. Epidemic (regionally present) and pandemic (globally present) diseases affect us all and do not respect borders. Global problems require a global response.

Low- and middle-income countries are often affected by infectious disease outbreaks harder and for longer, as many lack robust and well financed health systems to tackle them. While rich countries bought up vaccine supplies early on and are now administering boosters, only 9.6% of people in low-income countries have received at least one dose. Good health underlies the all of the Sustainable Development Goals, affecting people's ability to work and access education, yet an additional [119-124 million people](#) were pushed into extreme poverty in 2020.

The costs of epidemic infectious diseases are vast, in both human and economic terms. COVID-19 has killed millions and destroyed the livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people. As well as the devastating death toll and disruption to societies, COVID-19 [could cost the global economy \\$4.1 trillion](#). But COVID-19 is not the first nor is likely to be the last pandemic the world faces. Surveillance, infection control, and new vaccines and treatments are required to respond to future threats as well as ongoing epidemics like tuberculosis (TB).

## Why vaccines matter

Vaccines are among the most powerful tools in the fight against infectious diseases. Historically, vaccine development has been a long, challenging and costly process, with limited market potential for vaccines for new diseases. The devastating outbreak of Ebola in West Africa 2014-15, which killed more than 11,000 people and had an economic and social burden of [over \\$53 billion](#), showed that few vaccines were ready to be used against such new threats.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have seen some of the most impressive advances in vaccine technology, which not only better equip us to respond to COVID-19, but can also help dramatically reduce the threat posed by other infectious diseases, including [historically neglected and underfunded diseases like tuberculosis](#).

## Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations

The [Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations](#) (CEPI) is a global partnership between public, private, philanthropic and civil society organisations, launched in 2017 to accelerate the development of vaccines against emerging infectious diseases and enable equitable access to these vaccines during outbreaks. CEPI aims to reach people who are most impeded from gaining access to health services and to strengthen systems where they are weakest.

CEPI works to advance vaccines against known threats before epidemics begin; to fund new technologies with the potential to accelerate the development of vaccines against previously unknown pathogens; and to support and coordinate activities to improve the world's collective response to epidemics. CEPI works closely with global partners to do this, co-leading the [COVAX vaccine access programme](#) for COVID-19, alongside Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the World Health Organization (WHO), with agreements in place to make 3 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines available globally. Since its launch, CEPI has made investments in 21 vaccine candidates against its priority pathogens, three rapid response platforms to develop vaccines against the threat of an unknown future virus, 14 COVID-19 vaccines, and an array of enabling science projects.

### A speedy COVID-19 response

As soon as the COVID-19 virus emerged in January 2020, CEPI moved urgently to accelerate vaccine development. CEPI was the first global public sector body to invest in [mRNA COVID-19 vaccines](#); the first to recognise and fund the preparatory coronavirus work at the University of Oxford; and the first to draw up a blueprint for a globally fair COVID-19 vaccine allocation system. These speedy decisions resulted in safe and effective vaccines and the networks to enable their development, manufacture and distribution, saving millions of lives across the world.

### Equitable access

CEPI has worked to ensure equitable access to the tools developed with its support. Equitable access to vaccines in a disease outbreak means that appropriate vaccines are first made available to populations when and where they are needed to end an outbreak or curtail an epidemic, regardless of ability to pay.

### What needs to happen next?

CEPI's six-point plan aims to use the learning from the pandemic response to-date to inform the development of vaccines for future disease outbreaks; including: reducing the vaccine development timeline to 100 days; developing a library of prototype vaccines; developing vaccines against known threats; and supporting enhanced vaccine manufacturing capacity. It aims to support low- and middle-income countries to develop infrastructure and expertise to conduct studies, carry out technology transfer, and establish national and regional vaccine manufacturing. This plan would give the world a better chance to tackle and contain outbreaks close to the source, before they spread around the world and become pandemics. It is a vital investment in pandemic preparedness.

CEPI needs [\\$3.5 billion over the next 5 years](#) to realise this plan and is calling on world leaders to support its work. On 8 March, the UK Government will [host a summit](#) at which the international community can pledge financial support. This month, please write to the Foreign Secretary Liz Truss MP and Health Secretary Sajid Javid MP, asking them to commit £60 million per year for 5 years to CEPI to help keep the world safe from infectious disease threats.

#### Take action!

1. Please write to the Foreign Secretary Liz Truss MP and Health Secretary Sajid Javid MP, asking them to commit £60 million per year for 5 years to CEPI to help keep the world safe from infectious disease threats.

#### Contact details:

Rt. Hon. Liz Truss MP, Secretary of State, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH. Email [fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:fcdo.correspondence@fcdo.gov.uk)

Rt. Hon. Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, 39 Victoria St, London SW1H 0EU. Email <https://contactus.dhsc.gov.uk/>

Let us know that you've taken this month's action by emailing Campaigns Coordinator Tanya Begum at [tanya.begum@results.org.uk](mailto:tanya.begum@results.org.uk)