



## The Uplifting Africa Program

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### Lack of Vaccines and Lack of Covid-19 Tests in Africa



Senegalese waiting for J&J Covid-19 vaccinations. Photo Credit: AP Leo Correa

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The Uplifting Africa Program

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Health and Humanitarian Program

# Lack of Vaccines and Lack of Covid-19 Tests in Africa

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As we look at countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Germany and the United States, they have provided free Covid-19 tests to their citizens. However, when it comes to Africa, the access to free Covid-19 testing is very limited. For instance, Thembi Ndlovu is a hairdresser in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, who wanted a free test for Covid-19 after finding out that a friend had the virus. However, the local pharmacy could not test her because they ran out of supplies.

Back in November 2020, Zimbabwe had introduced free walk-in testing for Covid-19, yet today it still lacks supplies and does not distribute at-home tests. For example, to get a Covid-19 test in a Zimbabwe pharmacy, you have to pay \$15, which can go up to 4,830 ZWL (Zimbabwean currency). The cost of getting a Covid-19 test in places like Zimbabwe is extremely high especially since a large population lives in poverty and the situation has become worse because of the pandemic.

PBS News Hour reported that, “Some health officials say the discrepancy between rich and poor countries is discriminatory and has denied poor countries a chance to stem the spread of the coronavirus in the absence of vaccine,” (PBS, 2022). A lack of access to Covid-19 tests puts the entire African continent at risk. The World Health Organization has meanwhile failed to lower the price for self-testing in Africa.

Due to lack of testing, Africa has a record of “125,000 Covid-19 cases and 1,600 deaths,” (PBS, 2022). It is tragic that people continue to die without the wealthy countries stepping in to help. If Africa was provided with self-testing, perhaps the spread of the virus could be slowed. The conclusion to the Covid-19 test in Africa is that every home should have a self-test so everyone knows when they are sick and when they are not to stop the spread of the virus.



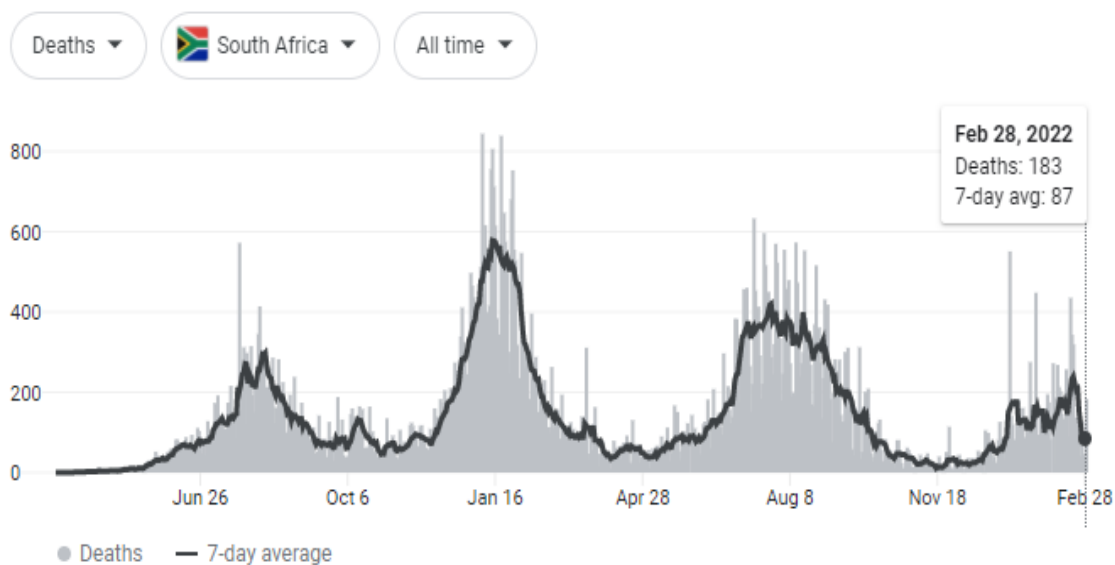
**UK is teaming up with Senegal to Produce Rapid Testing Photo Credit: Reuters Kokoroko**

CNN has reported that the African continent has emerged to control the virus early this year. Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, the Director for Africa in the World Health Organization, explained that the African countries have gotten smarter in responding to the virus. However, as Dr. Moeti stated, that “As long as we remain vigilant, and we act intensely particularly on vaccination, the continent is on track for controlling the pandemic,” (CNN, 2022). Although many African citizens have yet to be vaccinated, the regions in African have shown a tremendous drop in Covid-19 cases compared to the rest of the world. The reason that Africa has not experience the high mortality may be a combination of factors: African nations do not have the resources to track the causes of mortality, in many African cities the populations is younger and less likely to die from Covid-19, Africans maybe less susceptible to the virus because of a stronger resistance to colds, and finally the climate and weather conditions may also assist in blunting the spread of the virus. Failure to expand vaccinations in Africa may help create more variants. We have seen the creation of the Omicron

virus, a variant that started in South Africa, because of the failure to vaccinate its population rapidly. One may link this failure to the failure of Western pharmaceutical companies to offer vaccines to poorer nations in Africa. This failure to rapidly vaccinate populations in the underdeveloped world may continue to spiral the pandemic forward as future variants may continue to confound our medical response in stamping out the virus.

### New cases and deaths

From [JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data](#) · Last updated: 19 hours ago



**New cases and Deaths in South Africa – Image Credit [JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data](#)**

As the Washington Post reported, “There is no other word for it but a betrayal of trust, the consequences of which are now playing out in Africa, in lives lost that should not have been, had the wealthiest countries allowed poorer countries access to their fair share of vaccines,” WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Tedros served as Ethiopia’s health minister and foreign affairs minister before becoming the World Health Organization’s first African Director General.

## Work Cited

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