

This brief is intended to support applicants, partners, civil society, and others in developing funding requests and/or advocating for prioritization of medical oxygen, pulse oximetry, and respiratory therapies in development bank grants and loans.

Accessing low-interest loans and grants from multilateral development banks (MDBs) to strengthen national medical oxygen systems is achievable with careful preparation, strong alignment to national priorities, and proactive engagement with MDB processes. By structuring robust project proposals based on costed national medical oxygen plans, governments can unlock significant concessional financing to build resilient, sustainable oxygen infrastructure—ultimately saving lives and strengthening health systems for future challenges.

MDB financing can support procurement and installation of oxygen generation plants, including pressure swing adsorption (PSA) plants and air separation units (ASU), mobile concentrators, oxygen storage units, distribution pipelines to hospital beds, and more. Medical oxygen systems are critical medical infrastructure that can significantly reduce national mortality from a large number of infectious (e.g., pneumonia) and chronic (e.g., chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) diseases and conditions while strengthening surgical and emergency care, including during pandemics and other emergencies.

Key MDB finance instruments include:

- ▶ **Concessional loans**—low- and no-interest loans repayable over 20 to 40 years.
- ▶ **Grants**—nonrepayable funds for eligible projects.
- ▶ **Technical assistance**—for planning, capacity-building, implementation, and evaluation.
- ▶ **Cofinancing platforms**—collaborative mechanisms that pool funds from multiple institutions, like the [Health Impact Investment Platform](#), a partnership between the World Health Organization (WHO) and several MDBs to unlock US\$1.5 billion to improve primary health care services.



Who are the major health-spending MDBs?

World Bank Group

The World Bank Group (WB) finances [health systems](#) globally primarily through grants from the [International Development Association](#) to low-income countries and highly concessional loans from the [International Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#) to middle-income countries. Its investments strengthen health infrastructure, service delivery, digital systems, supply chains, and the health workforce while also expanding financial protection through mechanisms such as insurance schemes and results-based financing. The WB increasingly mobilizes cofinancing from its own [trust funds](#) (e.g., Pandemic Fund, Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents) and supports pandemic preparedness and broader system reforms that position health as essential to poverty reduction and human capital development. The WB currently manages a [US\\$27 billion](#) health portfolio.

Asian Development Bank

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) supports [health sector investments](#) in the Asia and the Pacific region primarily through a mix of grants from the [Asian Development Fund](#) for the poorest member countries, loans to middle-income countries, and technical assistance. Its support strengthens health infrastructure, service delivery, and health financing reforms while mobilizing additional resources and promoting sustainable, system-wide improvements. The ADB currently manages a US\$7.4 billion health portfolio and is expanding its investments in health systems, universal health coverage, and pandemic preparedness. The ADB plans to raise health financing to roughly [6 to 10 percent of its operations](#) by 2030.

African Development Bank

The African Development Bank Group (AfDB) invests in [health systems](#) across the continent of Africa by providing concessional loans and grants to African nations through the [African Development Fund](#). The AfDB also supports project preparation and guarantees depending on country needs. The Bank's investments increasingly prioritize self-sufficient health systems and local production of critical medicines and supplies, often through cofinancing partnerships that mobilize additional resources and position health as a driver of inclusive economic growth. The AfDB currently manages a [small but growing](#) health portfolio, with plans to [expand to US\\$6 billion](#) in coming years.

Other MDBs

Other MDBs like the **Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)**, the **Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)**, the **European Investment Bank (EIB)**, and the **Arab Coordination Group** also offer health financing. The IDB focuses heavily on health system modernization, digital health, hospital infrastructure, and primary care reforms across Latin America and the Caribbean; the **IsDB** finances health infrastructure, supply chains, and pandemic preparedness, with an emphasis on results-based financing and alignment with Islamic financing principles; and the **EIB** primarily funds capital-intensive health projects such as hospitals, research facilities, medical technology, and pharmaceutical manufacturing in Europe and partner countries, often leveraging partnerships with the European Commission. Together, these institutions channel billions annually into health. The **Arab Coordination Group**, a coalition of ten multilateral Arab funds and banks working together on development finance,¹ typically focuses on health systems strengthening, hospitals, clinics, water and sanitation, and maternal and child health programs in developing countries.

Smaller and niche MDBs also finance health projects, including the [Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank](#).

Tips!



- **Align with multilateral development bank priorities** by positioning oxygen as core health infrastructure tied to universal health coverage, pandemic preparedness, climate co-benefits, and economic returns.
- **Fund systems** by proposing an integrated package—production, distribution, devices, maintenance, and data.
- **Show leverage + sustainability** by demonstrating government ownership, a clear implementation plan, and cofinancing to de-risk and accelerate scale.

Including medical oxygen projects in MDB applications

MDB financing has rigorous standards for project design, environmental and social safeguards, and financial viability. National health ministries should take the following preparatory steps.

Align with national health policies and strategies

- ▶ Ensure oxygen system projects are embedded in national health plans and strategies (e.g., national oxygen roadmaps or plans, emergency care plans, health infrastructure plans, universal health coverage strategies, and others).
- ▶ Demonstrate how the project will advance national health and development goals and targets, with specific reference to MDB priorities (e.g., maternal and newborn health, pandemic preparedness, and climate-health intersections, such as solar-powered generation).
- ▶ Outline any engagement with private-sector development finance institutions, like the International Financial Corporation, if relevant to the project.
- ▶ Highlight project alignment with relevant global health goals and targets (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals, noncommunicable disease goals), and instruments (e.g., [WHO resolution on increasing access to medical oxygen](#), [United Nations political declaration to combat noncommunicable diseases](#), among others).

Document needs assessment and feasibility

- ▶ Assess baseline gaps in oxygen availability (facility surveys, clinical data) or include prior recent assessments conducted during COVID-19, in the development of national medical oxygen plans, or published in peer-reviewed literature.
- ▶ Cost infrastructure, equipment, training, maintenance, and operational expenses, or include prior costing in the national medical oxygen plan.
- ▶ Include maintenance and sustainability plans (e.g., budgeting for spare parts and technicians).

Build a cross-sectoral team

- ▶ Include all ministries with a role in medical oxygen provision (e.g., health, finance, public procurement, energy, transportation, industry, among others).
- ▶ Engage the ministry of finance early—MDB financing is negotiated primarily with finance ministries.
- ▶ Consult with relevant nongovernment actors (e.g., health professional associations, academic institutions, patient advocates, nongovernmental organizations, among others).

Prepare documentation

Key documents that are often required include:

- ▶ Project concept note or brief summarizing objectives, needs, and expected impacts.
- ▶ Feasibility study and financial model with cost estimates and sustainability analysis.
- ▶ Environmental and social management framework addressing safeguards.
- ▶ Procurement strategy aligned with MDB procurement rules.

¹ Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Arab Gulf Programme for Development, Arab Monetary Fund, Islamic Development Bank, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, OPEC Fund for International Development, Qatar Fund for Development, Saudi Fund for Development.

A great deal of data exists to help countries make the case for including medical oxygen projects in MDB applications. The work of the [Lancet Global Health Commission on medical oxygen security](#), the [Global Oxygen Alliance’s investment case](#), and a vast, peer-reviewed literature hosted at the [Access to Oxygen \(A2O₂\) Resource Library](#) include estimates of gaps in oxygen access for all regions and many countries, and for critical populations, including adults and children living with a wide range of infectious and chronic health conditions.

Government officials may not be aware that they can secure financing to **strengthen medical oxygen systems—infrastructure and human capital**—from multilateral development banks and that they can leverage public sector funding to increase financing from other sources, including from private sector finance institutions (e.g., the International Finance Corporation).



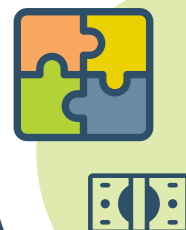
Engaging MDB application processes

MDBs do not typically have specific calls for proposals or deadlines for submissions. Instead, there are “project cycles” where governments work with the MDB to develop, submit, implement, and evaluate a specific project on a rolling basis (see WB example below). Certain grants or trust fund programs (e.g., the WB’s Pandemic Fund and Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents) may have formal calls with published submission deadlines, so it is always important to check.

Early engagement is critical to positioning an oxygen project for financing by an MDB. Countries should first determine which MDBs they are eligible to apply to and, among those, which institution is the best fit for the proposed investment. Once identified, it is important to contact the relevant MDB country or regional office to express interest in funding—whether as a loan, grant, or blended package. Early dialogue helps shape the project and align expectations, and should involve both health and finance ministries, with the office of the head of government informed for larger initiatives. Some platforms, such as the [Health Impact Investment Platform](#), also provide opportunities to submit concept notes and access technical assistance for developing investment plans.

During the project preparation phase, ministries of health can request technical assistance from MDBs to strengthen in-house capacity and refine key elements of the proposal, including design, costing, and environmental and social assessments. This technical assistance is often financed through MDB trust funds or dedicated windows, which can significantly reduce up-front costs for governments. Once the preparatory work is complete, a full project proposal is submitted—typically coordinated through the ministry of finance or a designated implementing agency—to ensure alignment with national financing and development priorities.

Following submission, MDBs review proposals against criteria such as development impact, technical feasibility, fiduciary integrity, and environmental and social safeguards. This stage may involve detailed negotiations on financing terms, including the balance between grants and loans, interest rates, and repayment schedules, depending on the country’s eligibility and debt profile. Clarity on the timing of MDB board approval is also essential, as it determines when funds can be committed and the project can move toward implementation.



Maximizing success: Practical tips

Engage early and strategically

- ▶ Start conversations with MDBs before project design is fully complete—early engagement increases the chance of alignment with financing windows.

Integrate sustainability and resilience

- ▶ Frame oxygen system investments as part of emergency preparedness and health system resilience (e.g., oxygen for pandemic response), as many MDBs are focused on pandemic preparedness and response.

Leverage regional platforms

- ▶ Use regional MDB offices and networks (e.g., West Africa, East Asia) to ensure alignment with country contexts.

Build coalitions

- ▶ Partner across relevant government ministries, civil society, professional associations, United Nations agencies, and nongovernmental organizations with expertise in medical oxygen to strengthen project credibility and technical depth.

Prepare for cofinancing

- ▶ Consider cofinancing arrangements where multiple MDBs or donors share project costs—this can spread risk and increase resource mobilization.
- ▶ Work with the financial ministry to explore cofinancing from domestic government sources as this can strengthen your proposal.

Examples of MDB oxygen projects

Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the COVID-19 pandemic, the **World Bank** COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Project helped the country to dramatically expand access to medical oxygen and critical care by supplying 1.5 million liters of oxygen to treatment centers and supporting a long-term solution through the purchase and installation of eight pressure swing adsorption oxygen plants across five provinces, with hospital staff trained to maintain them. Using an innovative facilitated procurement mechanism, the project also equipped intensive care units nationwide amid a global shortage of ventilators, enabling the acquisition of 400 intensive care unit beds and related critical-care equipment worth US\$20 million for 59 hospitals in 15 provinces. These investments significantly boosted the country's ability to treat critically ill patients, reduced delays in accessing oxygen, improved clinical monitoring, and strengthened health system resilience beyond the pandemic. Read more about this WB project [here](#).

Pakistan

In 2020, the **ADB** financed 220 oxygen concentrators worth US\$331,000 for Pakistan's Ministry of National Health Services to strengthen hospital capacity in seven major cities, enabling treatment of COVID-19, birth asphyxia, and complicated pneumonia. This support, part of a broader ADB grant that included an initial US\$500,000 for personal protective equipment and oxygen equipment and an additional US\$20 million for lifesaving medical supplies, diagnostics, and critical health infrastructure, complemented Pakistan's pandemic response by expanding care close to patients' communities, reducing hospital burden, and supporting vulnerable populations. UNICEF and ADB collaborated on procurement, technical assistance, and logistics, leveraging UNICEF's global expertise to enhance the government's ability to manage COVID-19 and deploy vaccines efficiently. Read more about this ADB support [here](#).

South Sudan

With grant funding from the **AfDB**, South Sudan installed its first medical oxygen plant at Juba Teaching Hospital to strengthen the country's COVID-19 response. The plant has been producing 2,500 liters of oxygen per day and refilling up to 72 cylinders daily, reducing reliance on imports and improving emergency care. The US\$980,000 project, implemented by WHO, included 240 cylinders, four years of service, and construction of a housing facility. The project was complemented by renovations of three isolation centers and the provision of essential medicines, personal protective equipment, and training for 400 health workers. Officials highlighted that the plant and related interventions will save lives, bolster intensive care capacity, and enhance South Sudan's health system preparedness for current and future public health emergencies. More about this AfDB project is available [here](#).

Contact information

Health ministries should first contact the finance ministry team that manages the selected MDB relationship as that team should have the relevant MDB contact.

If not, MDB country and regional office contacts are typically listed on websites, often with email addresses (e.g., the World Bank Nigeria web page <https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/country/nigeria>).

Email and ask to be connected to the relevant health or health infrastructure lead for your country/region.

When emailing, specify your purpose (seeking financing for a medical oxygen infrastructure project) to be routed appropriately.

Resources

- ▶ **WB** Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice: <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/topic/health-nutrition-and-population/>
- ▶ **ADB** Human and Social Development Sector Office: <https://www.adb.org/what-we-do/topics/health>
- ▶ **AfDB** health and education sector: <https://www.afdb.org/en/private-sector/what-we-invest/health-education>
- ▶ **IDB** Health, Nutrition and Population Division: <https://www.iadb.org/en/blog/health-nutrition-and-population>
- ▶ **EIB** Global: <https://www.eib.org/en/projects/topics/global/index>
- ▶ **IsDB** health sector: <https://www.isdb.org/what-we-do/sectors>