Global distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine is one of the most significant logistical challenges of this generation. It is requiring a concerted effort from the pharmaceutical and aviation industries, logistics providers, governments, nonprofit organizations, and community health workers worldwide. Airlink is committed to contributing to the planning and implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. To that end, a survey was conducted of more than 20 nonprofit organizations in the relief sector, gathering data and insight into the logistical challenges of supporting equitable access to the vaccine.

The vast majority of organizations (85%) surveyed are willing to participate in vaccine distribution efforts. Funding and availability of the vaccine were identified as the main gaps in organizations’ abilities to distribute a COVID-19 vaccine to developing countries. Other key findings detail organizations’ capabilities to support vaccination programs, including knowledge of cold chain logistics and access to community health workers to administer COVID-19 vaccines.

Nonprofit organizations’ plans for COVID-19 vaccine distribution:

- 52% of organizations would be willing to play a role in vaccine distribution, but no concrete plans have been made yet
- 33% of organizations were already planning to be involved in vaccine distribution efforts
- 15% of organizations were not planning to be involved

Ways nonprofit organizations are preparing for COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts:

- Distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE): 72%
- Establishing point of care treatment/vaccination programs: 56%
- Building the capacity of local health systems: 56%
- Identifying and solving gaps in availability of local cold storage: 50%
- Developing logistics partnerships to transport the vaccine: 50%

Most relevant foreseen gaps in organizations’ ability to distribute COVID-19 vaccines in developing countries:

- Funding
- Availability of Vaccine
- Logistics Capabilities
- Air Freight Transportation
Nonprofit organizations’ main capabilities to support COVID-19 vaccine distribution efforts:

74% of organizations reported having access to enough community health workers to help administer a COVID-19 vaccine within their countries of operations.

62% of organizations reported having internal knowledge of cold chain logistics for handling and distribution of temperature controlled supplies.

“We have refrigerators, freezers, and ultra-cold freezer equipment in our US warehouse. We have experience with international and domestic cold chain shipping.”

“We currently handle international shipping and in-country distribution of cold chain medications and lab supplies.”

“We work locally with major hospitals dealing with COVID patients and have the ability to administer the vaccine.”

“We oversee or coordinate with large numbers of community health workers in many refugee contexts.”

Organizations’ current COVID-19 responses:

- Response to other emergencies exacerbated by COVID-19: 76%
- Direct response to spikes in COVID-19: 62%
- Sending non-PPE supplies and equipment: 62%
- Direct support of water, sanitation, and hygiene practices: 43%
- Enhancing testing capacity: 43%
- Training community health workers: 38%

Countries where organizations have active COVID-19 responses:

- United States
- Haiti
- Lebanon
- Philippines
- Peru
- Uganda
- Yemen
- India
- Sierra Leone
- Liberia
- Jordan
- Bangladesh
- Guatemala
- Malawi
- DRC

Survey Information
The COVID-19 Vaccination Distribution Planning survey was fielded between October and December 2020. The survey captured 21 respondents from nonprofit organizations directly involved in humanitarian relief efforts, and their geographical area spans across the world. For more information on methodology, please contact Cindy Rocha, Capabilities Development Manager, at crocha@airlinkflight.org.

About Airlink
Airlink (www.airlinkflight.org) is a nonprofit disaster relief organization linking the aviation industry and humanitarian response organizations to ensure relief workers and material aid reach those impacted by natural disasters and other humanitarian crises around the globe.