

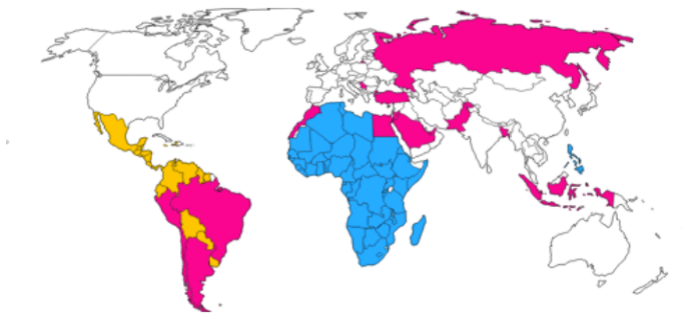
UAE announces successful Chinese vaccine

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced that China's coronavirus vaccine protected 86% of people in a trial of 31,000 people. The UAE government also announced plans to "resume all activities within two weeks", sending a positive message about the two countries' vaccine cooperation. The vaccine was developed by the Sinopharm unit of China National Biotec Group (CNBG). Sinopharm previously said that among the nearly one million Chinese people who have been vaccinated, only a few experienced mild symptoms and none experienced a serious adverse reaction. However, Sinopharm has yet to publish data of its phase three trials and its emergency distribution program in China has been seen as 'unconventional' by some health experts. China has several other Covid-19 experimental vaccines in late-stage trials.

China's Vaccine Web

Almost 100 countries have vaccine links with the Asian giant so far

■ Offered Chinese loan for buying vaccines
■ Official testing/manufacturing agreement ■ Offered supply priority



Data compiled by Bloomberg

An 86% efficacy rate is near the high bar set by Western front-runners such as the novel mRNA vaccines from Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc. which showed higher efficacy of more than 90%. The difference is that the mRNA vaccines from Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc. present distribution challenges for some nations as they require deep-freeze facilities and trucks. CNBG's vaccine can be transported and stored at normal refrigerated temperatures, making it more favorable to most of the developing world.

China's other vaccine Sinovac, has already been distributed in Indonesia and Sinovac's partner in Brazil, The Butantan Institute, said phase three trial results are set to be released on December 15.

China has promised countries in Southeast Asia and Africa they will be first in line when Beijing's home-grown vaccines are ready to be distributed, while Chinese companies have also signed agreements with some of these developing nations to test and manufacture the vaccines. This is part of President Xi Jinping's promise to make any Chinese vaccine a "global public good".

Western experts say Beijing may use the vaccine as "a means to expand China's influence and soft power" as well as ease frictions with countries that may blame China for the pandemic. China for its part has said it will not turn the vaccines into any kind of geopolitical weapon or diplomatic tool and opposes any politicization of vaccine development. China currently maintains an advantage as it has successfully controlled the pandemic at home and has greater leisure to distribute the vaccine abroad, while the US continues to deal with a host of domestic issues surrounding the pandemic and is less able to provide aid to other countries. Therefore, China may indeed take a leading role to supply the vaccine worldwide, especially to the developing world.