



COUNTDOWN TO LAND BORDERS REOPENING

Government of Ghana
Ministry of Health – Ministry of Interior

panabios.org



PanaBIOS



Ghana's land borders are Opening in April 2022.



What do you need to know?

Question 1 : Land borders have remained closed since March 2020. Why are we opening them now?

Answer: The ECOWAS Heads of State met in Accra in December 2021, reviewed all the relevant technical advice and concluded that all ECOWAS countries must take the necessary steps to reopen land borders to reduce the burden on border communities and citizens whose lives and livelihoods have been disrupted as a result of the closures in the wake of the pandemic.

Question 2: Does that mean that the conditions that led to their closure have all gone?

Answer: Yes and No.

No, in the sense that COVID-19 has not completely disappeared from the ECOWAS region. We must remain vigilant and act with caution and diligence to prevent a resurgence.

Yes, in the sense that we now have more resources and capacities to manage the pandemic than before.

What do you need to know?

Question 3: What are some of these Resources and Capacities?

Answer:

- 1) We have more stocks of vaccines than ever and far more Ghanaians are vaccinated compared to 2021. Vaccination is proven to reduce deaths and hospitalization.
- 2) Ghana is well ahead of other countries in implementing tools to verify the authenticity of vaccination records and PCR testing. In line with our digitalization agenda, we are a pioneer country in implementing the African Union PanaBIOS, UNDP Global Haven and WAHO BIOMARS systems. Compared to the time when the borders were closed, we are more confident in our ability to screen travellers for COVID-19.

Question 4: What are the PanaBIOS, Global Haven and BIOMARS systems?

Answer:

- 1) PanaBIOS is an African Union backed system to help African countries implement the continental standard on health screening for travel: www.africacdc.org/trusted-travel
- 2) BIOMARS is an initiative led by the West Africa Health Organisation to harmonise testing and vaccination data management in the ECOWAS region to enable cross-border verification and
- 3) Global Haven is a set of tools supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to enhance the capacity of countries to prevent fake vaccine and test certificates.

What do you need to know?

Question 5: Practically, what will someone need to enter Ghana through the land borders?

Answer:

- 1) We are only accepting people with vaccination passes or PCR test results issued according to the AU standard (www.africacdc.org/trusted-vaccines) **within 48 hours of travel** and verified on PanaBIOS (trustedtravel.panabios.org). Everyone can visit designated GHS clinics to have this done for them, do it online or ask a relative to do it for them. Foreigners coming from outside the country have to do it online or obtain support from their local vaccination authorities. Publicity materials with more information shall be circulated and catalogued here: www.panabios.org/landborders/BIOMARS/Ghana (short version: www.tinyurl.com/landborders)
- 2) In the future, based on our reviews, we may expand the screening methods to include those with vaccination certificates issued by whatever system so long as the GHS can verify that system. We will publish guidance to assist the public. Furthermore, rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) for COVID approved by the FDA and bearing the ProPer and Panacode security seals may also be explored. Travellers can get these from selected pharmacies and stalls once and if we decide to use them.

What do you need to know?

Question 6: You mentioned the use of science and data for decision-making in our land border management and periodic reviews, can you shed a bit more light on that?

Answer:

We now have the capacity in Ghana to ensure that anyone who enters or exits the country through the land borders can, if the circumstances so require, be electronically screened and their health data digitally captured, whether it is their vaccination status or test result. This should enable more effective contact tracing and investigations in the case of any spike in cases. We also have the capacity to randomly test incoming travellers if we determine that this is warranted by emerging risk information. The data collected through these measures will enable us to make scientific decisions as the pandemic evolves.

What do you need to know?

Question 7: Does that mean that you won't mandatorily test everyone at the border with the same system used at the airport?

Answer: No.

The reason is simply because the system used at the airport is super-sensitive and based on advanced fluorescent immunoassay technology. We took the on-arrival testing approach because people are coming in from all over the world making it harder to verify their vaccination and testing records. Later, the UNDP stepped in with the Global Haven system (www.globalhaven.org) which is helping out with verification, but it is a new system, and in the earlier phases of the pandemic we couldn't take chances. The risk presented by land borders is much smaller as 99% of the travellers are coming from within the West African region, which has a very low COVID-19 prevalence rate compared to places like Asia and Europe. The West Africa Health Organisation has also implemented a program called BIOMARS, which has been endorsed by the Heads of State, to make verification of vaccination and testing records much easier. Thus, the on-arrival testing will not be needed for everyone at the land borders. It will be introduced only if our risk analysis show a need in specific circumstances.

What do you need to know?

Question 8: So, what are the mandatory requirements again?

Answer:

Only vaccine certificates that can be verified on trustedtravel.panabios.org or PCR test results verified on the same platform shall be allowed. Travellers can get assistance to do this by calling the GHS hotline, emailing globalhaven@panabios.org or by asking a friend or relative to do it on their behalf. The system just asks for some details from the vaccine card or, where necessary, asks for it to be uploaded. The whole process takes about a minute or two.

Question 9: Where can travellers find more information on all this?

Answer: By visiting the GHS website, Panabios.org (www.panabios.org/landborders/BIOMARS/Ghana/ www.tinyurl.com/landborders), calling the GHS telephone hotline or sending email to globalhaven@panabios.org

