ACTaccelerator
ACCESS TO COVID-19 TOOLS
Hosted by World Health Organization

Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator
overview and update, July 2021

Context

- COVID-19 isn't over. Globally, there were more cases reported in the first 5 months of 2021 than in the whole of 2020. As case numbers continue to rise, more transmissible and dangerous variants risk taking hold, limiting the efficacy of available COVID-19 tools, threatening the recovery, and leading to ongoing economic and social disruption and ever more deaths. In Africa, the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths increased by almost 40% in the last week of June, and in some countries the number of deaths tripled or quadrupled. A study published in The Lancet suggests hospital patients who are critically ill with COVID-19 in Africa are far more likely to die than in other parts of the world because of limited healthcare resources.

- On 9 and 10 July 2021, G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors gathered in Venice to progress discussions on issues related to the international economy and global health. UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that a "global vaccine gap threatens us all because as the virus mutates, it could become even more transmissible, or even more deadly", arguing the G20 "is best placed to lead the world" in a "Global Vaccine Plan", and called for support to the IMF's US$ 50 billion investment roadmap. In the communique, Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors recognized the role of COVID-19 immunization as a global public good and reiterated their support to the ACT-Accelerator to address the current health crisis, urging both the public and private sector to address the remaining gaps, including through the equitable global sharing of safe, effective, quality and affordable vaccine doses.

- At the Venice meeting, the three co-chairs of the G20 High Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response presented the Panel's report, acknowledging we are nowhere near the end of the COVID-19 pandemic and calling for bold, concerted actions to lift the world out of the COVID-19 crisis. The Panel said, "the most immediate task is to close the urgent financing gaps for ACT-A and its COVAX Facility."

- Beyond the moral argument to leave no one behind, several economic studies (see *Links to ACT-Accelerator Resources*, below) states how ensuring equitable global access to COVID-19 tools aids economic recovery.

- On 30 June 2021, the Heads of the World Bank Group, IMF, WHO, and WTO convened the first meeting of the Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccines, Therapeutics and Diagnostics for Developing Countries. They called on G20 countries to (1) embrace the target of at least 40% vaccinations rates in every country by end-2021, and at least 60% by the first half of 2022, (2) share more vaccine doses now, including by ensuring at least 1 billion doses are shared with developing countries in 2021 starting immediately, (3) provide financing, including grants and concessional financing, to close the residual gaps, including for the ACT-Accelerator, and (4) remove all barriers to export of inputs and finished vaccines, and other barriers to supply chain operations. The IMF's "Proposal to End the COVID-19 Pandemic" finds the benefits of such measures amount to about US$ 9 trillion, far outweighing the costs which are estimated to be around US$ 50 billion.

- A Strategic Review of the ACT-Accelerator has launched. It will focus on the joint work, operations, results and financing of the ACT-Accelerator partnership and Pillars – and will document lessons learned and generate forward-looking recommendations to the co-hosts, participating agencies, and stakeholders to strengthen the work of the ACT-Accelerator. It will give particular attention to whether and how this

unique construct adds value to achieving its dual goals of accelerated development of COVID-19 tools and their equitable distribution globally, to help end the acute phase of the pandemic.

ACT-Accelerator Progress & Impact

- The World Health Organization (WHO) is supporting a South African consortium in establishing the first COVID-19 mRNA vaccine technology transfer hub. The facility will allow manufacturers from developing countries to receive training in how to produce vaccines, and the relevant licenses to do so, as part of global efforts to scale-up access to lifesaving treatments. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa and co-chair of the ACT-Accelerator Facilitation Council, described this as "a key moment for increasing production capacity in Africa for COVID-19 vaccines".

- COVAX has established a COVAX Manufacturing Task Force to optimize and prioritize the number of doses manufactured in the short term for COVAX, with a special emphasis on the AMC92 to ensure greater equity. This will kick-start the establishment of sustainable regional manufacturing of vaccines with a view to build long-term regional health security, mitigating the unintended impact on other vaccines and health products.

- COVAX released an updated supply forecast. Thanks to new agreements with manufacturers and dose-sharing by higher income economies, supplies are expected to reach two billion doses in January 2022 – only a short time later than previous forecasts, despite severe on-going supply delays. According to the forecast, COVAX's goal of delivering 1.8 billion doses to lower-income economies eligible for donor-supported doses via the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment (COVAX AMC) would be reached in the first quarter of 2022. At the Gavi Board meeting in June, the Board approved new funding of US$ 775 million to support the delivery of COVAX-funded doses in lower-income economies and humanitarian zones over the next two years.

- UNICEF has signed an agreement with Janssen Pharmaceutica NV to supply up to 220 million doses of the J&J single-dose vaccine for all 55 Member States of the African Union (AU) by the end of 2022. Some 35 million doses are to be delivered by the end of this year. The agreement comes as Africa faces the steepest surge in COVID-19 cases yet, and vaccine supply challenges have left many countries with large unvaccinated populations.

- Known as C19RM, the Global Fund's COVID-19 Response Mechanism supports countries to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on programs to fight HIV, TB and malaria, and initiates urgent improvements in health and community systems. As of 5 July 2021, US$229 million in full funding requests was awarded to 11 applicants, and US$504 million was awarded in fast-track funding requests. In addition, US$1,842 million is submitted or under review for potential C19RM 2021 funding. Trackers providing information on the progress of countries' C19RM funding requests, from registration and submission through to final approval, and a listing of C19RM allocations by country are available for download on The Global Fund's website.

- The COVID-19 Oxygen Emergency Taskforce – co-led by Unitaid and Wellcome – brings together key organisations working on oxygen access under ACT-Accelerator Therapeutics pillar, supporting countries to assess their oxygen needs and implement the best oxygen solutions. The taskforce is also supporting at-risk countries to access funding through the Global Fund's C19RM process and facilitating the safe

installation and supply of oxygen equipment. The taskforce is also supporting several countries to access World Bank funding. Further funding has come via an initial $20 million from Unitaid and Wellcome, which is being used to support working in nine countries in Africa with PATH and CHAI to address gaps in infrastructure, supply and maintenance. Another key component of the taskforce's work is engaging with industry to address market barriers that are hindering the oxygen response. An agreement brokered by Unitaid and CHAI under the COVID-19 Oxygen Emergency Taskforce last month saw two of the world's largest medical oxygen suppliers – Air Liquide and Linde - each collaborate with these ACT-Accelerator partners on increased access in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

- The Diagnostics pillar, together with UNICEF and other partners, has procured more than 60 million molecular and antigen rapid diagnostic tests for low-income countries (LICs) and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) and improved regionalized manufacturing and technology transfers. It has also supported over 70 countries in expanding laboratory infrastructure and ramping up testing, and is well positioned to deliver 900 million tests to LICs and LMICs in 2021.

- In June, large shipments of COVID-19 diagnostic tests procured by the Global Fund arrived in South Africa, to be stored and distributed throughout the country. Part of an order of 648,000 units, these antigen rapid diagnostic test (Ag RDT) kits can detect COVID-19 in under 15 minutes and are a crucial tool for health workers and community health workers on the front lines, as they don't require a laboratory to obtain the results. As of 1 July 2021, the Global Fund has procured 21.5 million diagnostic tests worldwide.

- The FIND high-level forum on diagnostic testing in May explored how COVID-19 has transformed testing, implications for diagnostics in health emergencies and universal health coverage, and how this has informed the FIND 2021 strategy. Following the event, a call to action to global leaders at the World Health Organization, European Union, African Union, and Heads of State from the G20 and G7 presidencies to world leaders to uphold diagnostics and equitable access to testing within their commitments to support sustainable recovery from COVID-19, was published.

- The Health Systems Connector (HSC) has procured personal protective equipment worth more than US$ 500 million. Partners also continue to work to assess the readiness of over 140 developing countries to deploy vaccines, finding that countries have made good progress since the publication of the effort's first report: 95% of countries have developed national vaccination plans, 79% have safety measures in place, and 82% have prioritizations of populations to receive the vaccine. However, only 59% have developed plans to train the large number of vaccinators needed and less than half have a plan in place to generate public confidence, trust, and demand for COVID-19 vaccines. The HSC has captured country-specific insights on bottlenecks and ongoing health systems-related challenges and actions needed to scale up the deployment of COVID-19 tools, and created a knowledge-sharing platform on health system strengthening for developing countries, to be available in mid-2021. The HSC has also developed global guidelines and training across multiple critical health system areas for developing countries. Additionally, the World Bank announced at the end of June that it is providing over $4 billion for the purchase and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines for 51 developing countries, half of which are in Africa.

What is the ACT-Accelerator and how is it delivering on its promise?

The **Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-Accelerator)** is a global coalition of organizations developing and deploying the new diagnostics, treatments and vaccines needed to end the acute phase of the pandemic. Pooling the expertise of its many partners, the ACT-Accelerator has quickly ushered in rapid, affordable tests and effective medicines, and established the COVAX facility for the equitable procurement and distribution of vaccines in low- and middle-income countries.
The ACT Accelerator's work is more vital than ever as new variants of the virus threaten to resist current COVID-19 tools, posing the risk of more death, illness, and social and economic harm. The ACT-Accelerator has four areas of work, or pillars:

- **A diagnostics pillar**, led by the Global Fund and FIND
- **A therapeutics pillar**, led by UNITAID and Wellcome
- **A vaccines pillar**, led by CEPI, Gavi and WHO and implementing partner UNICEF
- **A health systems connector**, led by the World Bank and the Global Fund

A workstream on access and allocation of COVID-19 products, hosted by WHO, cuts across the four pillars.
The ACT-Accelerator partnership was formed at the onset of the pandemic in response to a call from G20 leaders, and was launched by WHO, the European Commission, France and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Critical funding for the effort comes from an unprecedented mobilization of donors, including countries, the private sector, philanthropists and multilateral partners. It has supported the fastest, most coordinated, and successful global effort in history to develop tools to fight a disease.

What is required to reach the ACT-Accelerator's ambitions?

- With real demonstrations of progress and many lessons learned since its April 2020 launch, a refreshed strategy and budget for 2021, the ACT-Accelerator is intensifying its drive for equity and scale in the delivery of essential COVID-19 tools. As of 9 July 2021, an unprecedented mobilization of sovereign funders and private sector, philanthropic and multilateral contributors has galvanized commitments of USD 17.8 billion. The ACT-Accelerator remaining funding gap for 2021 is over US$ 16.7 billion.

- Noting that the funding gap for 2021 is a key obstacle to delivering on the promise of the ACT-Accelerator, the co-chairs of the Facilitation Council, President Ramaphosa of South Africa and Prime Minister Solberg of Norway, launched a financing campaign in May 2021 calling on global leaders to commit their share to ensure a fully-funded ACT-Accelerator. Given the scale of resources required, this will require countries to tap into fiscal stimulus funding as an addition to established development financing levels.

- The ACT-Accelerator provides the only integrated end-to-end global solution that targets the root cause of the crisis – severe COVID-19 disease – to accelerate an end to the acute phase of the pandemic. A funding delay or shortfall will delay the rollout of tools that are urgently needed and prolong the pandemic everywhere. This will increase the economic turmoil faced by countries and cause many more deaths and severe disease. A fully-funded ACT-Accelerator will save lives, lay the groundwork for the mass rollout of COVID-19 tools around the world, and provide an exit strategy from crisis.

Links to ACT-Accelerator resources

ACT-Accelerator website

ACT-Accelerator Frequently Asked Questions

ACT-Accelerator Refreshed Strategy and Budget for 2021

ACT-Accelerator Funding and Dose Sharing Commitment Tracker

ACT-A Newsletter

ACT-Accelerator “one year on” video

ACT-Accelerator one-year anniversary event

ACT-Accelerator 2020-2021 Impact Report

FIND COVID-19 Test Tracker

COVAX vaccine roll-out tacker

UNICEF Market Dashboard including COVAX Deliveries

ACT A social media toolkit

Independent research

International Chamber of Commerce Report: The Economic Case for Global Vaccinations

Eurasia Report: Ending the COVID-19 Pandemic - The Need for a Global Approach

Rand Analysis: COVID 19 and the Cost of Vaccine Nationalism

IMF: A Proposal to End the COVID-19 Pandemic

IPPPR: COVID-19: Make it the Last Pandemic

Save The Children: Financing COVID-19 vaccination efforts with equity: An agenda for the G7 summit

In the media

Lord Jim O'Neill article: A No-Brainer for the G20

Carl Bildt, WHO Special Envoy for the ACT-Accelerator: “Humanity’s Historic Test”

Euractiv Opinion: The pandemic can be over if we want it – Udo Bullman

Le Monde: Covid-19: global solidarity struggles for access to vaccines, treatments and tests

dpa-AFX: ACT accelerator to fight Covid-19 needs more funding

The Telegraph: WHO initiative to tackle COVID suffers funding gap of $19 billion

The Guardian: Coronavirus vaccines "remain out of reach" in the poorest countries - WHO

BBC Breakfast: Featured Jeremy Farrar on their morning show (broadcast)

Sky News Online: COVID-19: Scientists say vaccines could control pandemic, as Bill Gates optimistic 'the end will come'

Politico: The Covid tool every nation still needs

New York Times: I Run the W.H.O., and I Know That Rich Countries Must Make a Choice

The Telegraph: One year into the Covid-19 pandemic, testing is as vital as ever

Bloomberg: Wealthy Nations' Vaccine Spree Obscures Global Covid Misery

Financial Times: Gordon Brown: G7 must bear the burden of vaccinating the world

The Guardian: Gordon Brown leads calls for $60bn of Covid support for poor countries

Washington Post: Why we are calling for a new commitment to vaccine equity and defeating the pandemic

The Guardian: Covid: more than 200 leaders urge G7 to help vaccinate world's poorest

The Guardian: Can we vaccinate the world against Covid by the end of 2022?

Wall Street Journal: Poor Countries to Urge G-7 Members to Share More Covid-19 Vaccines

BBC News: Covid vaccines: Unicef asks G7 countries to donate now or risk wasting jabs

City AM: Gordon Brown proposes G7 funding model to vaccinate poorer countries

Bloomberg: How the G7 can really end the global pandemic

Devex: ACT-Accelerator calls on G-7 to pay their fair share

Financial Times: G7 should pay lion's share of costs to help end the pandemic

Politico: G-7 meeting sets stage for defining pandemic moment

For more information please contact: ACTaccelerator@who.int or visit https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator