ACTaccelerator
ACCESS TO COVID-19 TOOLS

Q3 Quarterly Update:
1 July – 30 September 2021

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About this update

The Q3 Update covers progress achieved by ACT-Accelerator partners between 1 July and 30 September 2021. It highlights how investments in the ACT-Accelerator continue to drive results and details the development, procurement and delivery of COVID-19 diagnostics, treatments, personal protective equipment (PPE) and vaccines to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), while outlining partnership efforts to strengthen health systems, save lives and mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic around the world. The Q3 Update also announces the new *ACT-Accelerator Strategic Plan & Budget*, which describes new ambitious targets and urgent financing needs.

State of the global pandemic

The Delta variant continues to dominate the global epidemiology and is now reported in 187 countries across all six WHO regions (as of 28 September 2021).[1] High numbers of cases and deaths in many countries indicate that we are still in the acute phase of the pandemic and future waves and surges of infections remain highly likely. The nearly 50 million new cases reported globally in Quarter 3 of 2021 continue to place enormous pressure on all countries and particularly those with fragile health systems.

Gross inequity in the distribution of all COVID-19 tools is still a feature of the global response. Of the more than 3.3 billion tests carried out across the world, only 0.4% have been performed in low-income countries. Without broader testing linked to sequencing, the whole world risks being blindsided by the next variant and unable to contain outbreaks. In addition, more than 26 countries are still struggling to meet the oxygen needs of COVID-19 patients. While the proportion of fully vaccinated people in high-income countries (HICs) has exceeded 60% as of September 2021, 50% in upper middle-income countries (UMICs) and 15% in lower middle-income countries (LMICs), inoculation of the world's poorest against COVID-19 is still too low, with only 1.3% population fully vaccinated in low-income countries (LICs).[2] Many high-income countries are now planning booster doses for their populations, while 56 countries are still below 10% coverage, and 28 below 2%. The target set by WHO to vaccinate 10% of all people in all countries by the end of September 2021 has been missed. Given the increasing global production levels of multiple COVID-19 vaccines, over 700 000 deaths in that same time period are unacceptable.

World leaders meeting at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the US-hosted COVID-19 Global Summit in September reiterated the call to reach agreed global targets of vaccinating 70% of the population by UNGA 2022, if not earlier. They also called for testing rates of one per 1,000 people per day in all countries by the end of 2021, and for all facilities treating patients with severe COVID-19 to have sufficient oxygen supplies, quality-assured treatments and PPE.

ACT-A overall financing

In just over nineteen months donors have pledged approximately US$ 18.5bn to the partner agencies of the ACT-Accelerator.

The *ACT-A Strategic Plan & Budget (Oct 2021 to Sep 2022)* builds on and supersedes ACT-A's prior plan and budget and lays out the new focus, strategic priorities, major scopes of work and funding needs for the ACT-Accelerator for the next 12 months. As detailed in the plan, an additional US$ 23.4 bn is required for ACT-Accelerator partners to deliver its overarching objective and strategic priorities for the period from October 2021 to September 2022.

Commitments to date	Oct 21- Sep 22 Funding need
US$ 18.5 billion	US$ 23.4 billion

[1] Source: Weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 - 28 September 2021 (who.int)
[2] Source: COVID-19 Task Force Dashboard

Confirmed cases & deaths[3]

From March 2020 to 1 October 2021

231 million cases

4.7 million deaths

Q3 1 July to 1 October 2021

49 million cases

0.7 million deaths

Low- and lower middle-income countries are testing only at a fraction of high-income countries[4]

Median testing rates by country income group
(2022 target: 100 tests per 100,000 people per day)

High-income countries	Upper middle-income countries	Lower middle-income countries	Low income countries
322	134	33	6
tests per 100k people per day	tests per 100k people per day	tests per 100k people per day	tests per 100k people per day

Cumulative procurement & delivery of ACT-A tools[5]

Since the beginning of pandemic to September 2021:

5+ billion vaccine doses secured, optioned, or received as donations through COVAX (323+ million delivered)

5+ billion

112+ million tests procured (81+ million delivered), and US$ 815m awarded to countries for tests

112 million

US$ 4.7m worth of COVID-19 medicines procured (US$ 3.3m delivered), and US$ 155m awarded to countries for therapeutics and other supportive hospital equipment

US$ 4.7 million

US$ 230m worth of oxygen supplies procured (US$ 158m delivered) and US$ 479m awarded to countries for medical oxygen

US$ 230 million

US$ 440m worth of personal protective equipment procured (US$ 408m delivered) and US$ 745m awarded to countries for protective equipment

US$ 440 million

[3] Source: Weekly epidemiological update on COVID-19 - 28 September 2021 (who.int)
[4] Source: FIND Test Tracker
[5] Products for COVID-19 procured and delivered, including through ACT-A partners. Source: WHO COVID-19 Supply Chain Dashboard. The link to this dashboard was not available at the time of publication

ACT-A Diagnostics Pillar
1 July – 30 September 2021

The Diagnostics Pillar is co-convened by FIND and the Global Fund, working closely with Unitaid, UNICEF, WHO and over 30 global health partners to scale-up equitable access to COVID-19 diagnostic technologies.

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Oct 21 - Sep 22 funding need

US$ 7.0 billion

US$ 7.0bn needed by the Diagnostics Pillar to fulfil its priorities and support countries in need between October 2021 and September 2022

R&D and Product Assessment

- Assessed three diagnostic tests to inform procurement of quality COVID-19 tests
- Agreed two technology transfers to expand manufacturing of high-quality Antigen RDTs (Ag RDTs) in Africa and Latin America (FIND & Unitaid)
- Advanced work to bring affordable self-testing to LMICs; six manufacturers out of 88 applicants selected to undergo due diligence and contract negotiations
- Conducted successful request for proposals to expand availability of point-of-care molecular tests; 50 applicants under review
- Selected five digital health partners (Argusoft, Dimagi, HISP India, Medic and ODK), through RDT data capture RFP. One data capture application (ODK) has been released; four are nearing completion

Market shaping and manufacturing

- Launched trade finance and governance initiative to drive resilience of diagnostic supply chains and improve affordability
- Launched six pilots to generate evidence for leveraging pharmacy networks to expand testing beyond symptomatic, contacts and healthcare workers
- Initiated development of diagnostic demand forecasts across Africa, Americas, and SE Asia to inform manufacturers and policy/guideline development led by CHAI with support from FIND and Unitaid
- Reduced prices for select molecular products, including Cepheid Xpert Xpress SARS-CoV-2 assay, from US$ 19.80 to US$ 14.90

Procurement

- Awarded US$ 634m for procurement of tests[1] (US$ 258m for PCR tests, US$ 376m for Ag RDTs) across almost 100 countries via the Global Fund's COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM), to enable the procurement of more than 110 million tests.
- In Q3, 26.7 million tests were procured by the Diagnostics Consortium (17 million delivered) for 84 countries in need, including through ACT-A partners[2]

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Demand generation & in-country delivery

- Awarded US$ 91m via the Global Fund C19RM to support roll-out of diagnostics tools[1]
- Awarded US$ 50m to introduce and accelerate uptake of Ag RDTs, self-tests and link to effective treatment options (FIND & Unitaid)
- Awarded nearly US$ 7m across 26 countries to support demand generation projects, including laboratory capacity building and de-centralized, community-based testing programmes led by FIND
- Nearly 12 000 trainees registered across 180+ countries for Ag RDT training led by FIND and WHO; over 4 000 have completed training to date[3]
- Country support working group led by UNICEF launched four taskforces to coordinate partner activities across policy and testing strategies; workforce capacity; operational research; and advocacy, communications and community engagement
- Provided targeted support to build national genomic sequencing capacity for detection of Sars-CoV-2 variants (e.g., UNICEF supported Malawi); WHO led consultation on a global strategy on genomic surveillance, including workplan to assess gaps, overlaps and needs on COVID-19 genomics
- Continued to build country capacities for laboratories as well as leveraging existing systems such as the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) and the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework to scale-up SARS-CoV-2 testing. In Q3 WHO provided laboratory training in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Montenegro, and Kazakhstan under the Better Labs for Better Health initiative

[1] Cumulative in 2021, not Q3 only
[2] Products for COVID-19 procured and delivered, including through ACT-A partners. Source: WHO COVID-19 Supply Chain Dashboard. The link to this dashboard was not available at the time of publication
[3] Data June – September 2021

ACT-A Therapeutics Pillar
1 July – 30 September 2021

The Therapeutics Pillar, co-led by Wellcome and Unitaid, continues to actively track the pipeline for new therapeutic products, engaging originator and generic companies on access issues for front-runner candidates. Important new therapies for severe disease as well as for mild/moderate outpatients were confirmed towards the end of Q3 as detailed below. The Global Fund, UNICEF and WHO have led procurement and deployment of COVID-19 therapeutics, including oxygen and related products, once confirmed in WHO guidelines.

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Oct 21 - Sep 22 funding need

US$ 3.5 billion

US$ 3.5bn needed by the Therapeutics Pillar to fulfil its priorities and support countries in need between October 2021 and September 2022

R&D and Product Assessment

- New recommendations included in the WHO Therapeutics and COVID-19 living guidelines (sixth version) to address: the use of the two IL-6 receptor blockers tocilizumab and sarilumab; and a combination of neutralizing monoclonal antibodies, casirivimab and imdevimab, in non-severe COVID-19 patients at the highest risk of severe disease and in severe and critically ill COVID-19 patients with seronegative status (published 24 September 2021).
- Boosted R&D with support for pre-clinical development of one oral novel antiviral, plus extended support to a further outpatient platform trial

Market shaping and manufacturing

- Reserved 19 tanks for bulk liquid oxygen for placement in LMICs, expected between Q4 2021 and Q2 2022, an initiative led by the Oxygen Taskforce
- Established several country agreements to improve access to oxygen: e.g., procurement guarantee with Afrox Zambia for up to 50 000 oxygen cylinders; collaborated with industry to rapidly develop an emergency solution to the oxygen crisis, the Oxygen Plant-in-a-Box package, with at least two long-term agreements established to ensure uninterrupted supply with three plants ordered in Uganda.
- Advanced market shaping, technical assistance and capacity building in LICs & LMICs, based on partner agreements concluded in Q2 (valued at approx. US$ 7m)

Procurement

- Awarded US$ 624m[1] for procurement of therapeutics across more than 75 countries (US$ 470m for oxygen, US$ 154m for others including IL-6 blockers) via Global Fund C19RM
- In Q3, US$ 60m worth of oxygensupplies and US$ 2.9m worth of COVID-19 medicines were procured (respectively US$ 21m and US$ 2.2m delivered) for 69 countries in need through coordinated system, including through ACT-A partners[2]

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Demand generation & in-country delivery

- Awarded US$ 69m[1] to support roll-out of therapeutic tools via Global Fund C19RM
- Awarded US$ 20m towards catalytic emergency oxygen equipment procurement and technical cooperation with countries to support needs assessments, surge planning and setting-up national oxygen systems, an initiative led by Unitaid and Wellcome
- Unitaid set to award U$ 50m between Q3 and Q4 for technical assistance, capacity building and catalytic oxygen support across several LMICs to enable the scale-up of more affordable, equitable and sustainable access to oxygen
- Enhanced regional incident management support teams (IMST) across several WHO regional offices to provide technical support for oxygen work at country level
- Provided UNICEF-led technical support to develop national oxygen strategies, with procurement, implementation and maintenance of essential oxygen equipment (e.g., Zambia, Mongolia), for the treatment of COVID-19 patients while ensuring sustainable system strengthening in over 23 countries, with impact on maternal, newborn and child health

[1] Cumulative in 2021, not Q3 only
[2] Products for COVID-19 procured and delivered, including through ACT-A partners. Source: WHO COVID-19 Supply Chain Dashboard. The link to this dashboard was not available at the time of publication

ACT-A Vaccines Pillar

1 July – 30 September 2021

COVAX, the ACT-Accelerator's Vaccines Pillar is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF as key implementing partner, and with vaccine manufacturers, civil society organizations and the World Bank

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R&D and Product Assessment

- Established five partnerships for clinical research studies to expand access to vaccines in vulnerable populations, assess immunogenicity and establish efficacy against variants with a focus on LMICs and vaccines supplied in-country
- Updated WHO SAGE Roadmap for prioritizing uses of COVID-19 vaccines in the context of limited supply (July 2021)
- Invested in a total R&D portfolio of 12 vaccine candidates since the start of the pandemic, including two new partnerships signed in Q3 (Gritstone Bio and Zerun/Walvax)
- SK bioscience became the seventh vaccine candidate to reach late-stage clinical trials, and Clover became the fifth vaccine candidate to release efficacy data (both CEPI-funded)
- CEPI Centralized Laboratory Network introduced assays (August 2021) to assess neutralization of variants in clinical trial samples
- Achieved new official recommendations for two vaccines (SAGE):
  - » AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine AZD1222 Vaxzevria™, SII COVISHIELD™ (30 July)

Oct 21 - Sep 22 funding need

US$ 7.0 billion

US$ 7.0bn needed by the Vaccines Pillar to fulfil its priorities and support countries in need between October 2021 and September 2022

Market shaping and manufacturing

- WHO EUL recommendations issued for 25 new sites in 11 countries[1]
- EUL indications updated (age, storage conditions, shelf life)
- Regulatory authorizations for vaccine donations: 333 completed, 83 in progress
- COVAX Marketplace launched, matching buyers to sellers of critical manufacturing supplies
- Successful site visit for manufacturing hub in South Africa; strong political commitment expressed and plan outlined to locally produce vaccines by Q4 2024
- Signed Advanced Purchase Agreements with Sinovac and Sinopharm for 380m and 170m doses

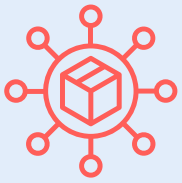
[1] Emergency Use License (EUL) in (AU, BE, CH, CN, DE, JA, IT, SA, SP, UK, US

Procurement

- In Q3, 193 million doses have been delivered through COVAX[2]
- COVAX Allocation Rounds (5 & 6) allocated nearly 168 million doses to 101 COVAX Facility Participants
- An exceptional COVAX Allocation Round 7 was implemented to target low-coverage participants (with less than 15% total vaccine coverage from all sources) able to absorb doses available in October
- New COVAX global supply forecasts showed available supply of 1.4 billion doses by end-2021 (enough to protect 20% of all adults in all 92 Advance Market Commitment (AMC) countries with the exception of India)
- Launched cost-sharing supply offerings for Moderna, Sinovac, and Sinopharm – providing AMC participants with opportunity to procure additional doses beyond their COVAX-funded allocations
- Allocation methodology amended, allowing 50% of all supply available in Nov-Dec 2021 to be reserved for low-coverage participants able to absorb more doses
- Revised 2022 country participation model for SFPs designed and approved by Gavi Board

[2] Source: UNICEF Dashboard

Demand generation & in-country delivery



- Installed 174 Ultra Low Temperature (ULT) cold chain devices in 19 countries to facilitate deployment of Pfizer doses. A further 68 ULTs are in the process of being installed in 10 additional countries
- Continued country readiness and delivery (CRD) work, led by WHO and UNICEF, to identify bottlenecks and deploy solutions for vaccine delivery. UNICEF provided technical support for national planning and evidence generation to inform social listening and community engagement as vaccine supply arrives
- Provided over US$ 340m, through UNICEF's ACT-Accelerator Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal in technical support and financial resources, to 113 low- and middle-income countries to prepare and roll out vaccines, with an additional US$ 13m available to support delivery in humanitarian settings. US$ 37m still to be allocated.
- By end of Q3, 81 AMC countries requested Gavi vaccine delivery support totaling US$ 225m. To date, US$ 173m has been approved and US$ 75m disbursed
- Global guidance issued and webinars held to support ramp-up planning: NDVP 2.0, budgeting tools, delivery and microplanning, demand generation, HR surges, etc
- Technical support provided by UNICEF for national planning and evidence generation to inform social listening and community engagement as vaccine supply arrives

ACT-A Health Systems Connector

1 July – 30 September 2021

The Health Systems Connector (HSC), now refocused as the Health Systems & Response Connector (HSRC), co-led by the Global Fund, WHO and the World Bank, and supported by UNICEF and the Global Financing Facility (GFF), ensures all countries have the necessary technical, operational and financial resources to translate new COVID-19 tools into national response interventions to stop transmission & save lives.

Oct 21 - Sep 22 funding need

US$ 5.9 billion

US$ 5.9bn needed by the Health Systems and Response Connector to fulfil its priorities and support countries in need between October 2021 and September 2022

Procurement

- Awarded US$ 470m via Global Fund C19RM for procurement of PPE across almost 100 countries[1]
- In Q3, US$ 23m worth of PPE was procured (US$ 33.9m delivered) for 91 countries in need[2]
- PPE stock has been pre-positioned by UNICEF across warehouses in Copenhagen, Shanghai, Panama and Dubai to be immediately available for countries in need, subject to availability of funding

[1] Cumulative in 2021, not Q3 only
[2] Products for COVID-19 procured and delivered, including through ACT-A partners. Source: WHO COVID-19 Supply Chain Dashboard. The link to this dashboard was not available at the time of publication

Demand generation & in-country delivery

- Through WHO, published guidance for COVID-19 response, including budgetary arrangements for national governments, country readiness assessments, and a costing tool for the introduction and deployment of vaccines
- Developed resources for infection prevention and control in primary care settings, including a specific Toolbox
- Awarded US$ 438m via Global Fund C19RM to support roll-out of health system tools[1]
- Provided more than US$ 12.8m as of Sept 20 to support risk communication and community engagement in 77 countries and six regional offices via UNICEF's ACT-Accelerator Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal
- Continued training health workers both on the ground (e.g., UNICEF health worker training package) and online (240 000 health personnel enrolled in clinical management support courses, available on OpenWHO platform)
- Maintained implementation of community surveys and policy dialogues and communicated findings to alert stakeholders of bottlenecks, and co-develop action plans to mitigate challenges and disruptions in access to COVID-19 tools
- Supported localized responses, including but not limited to, strengthening social listening and infodemic management, data analysis of multi-country surveys of 23 countries in the Middle East North Africa Region, and improving engagement of religious leaders and communities to promote adherence to preventive measures in Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq, with UNICEF technical support
- WHO supported Country Coordinating Mechanisms to develop the C19RM funding applications in support of the national COVID-19 readiness and response plans and updated National Deployment and Vaccination Plans in the COVID-19 Partners Platform

ACT-Accelerator Country Profile: Nepal

Monsoons, regular flooding and the seasonal migration of hundreds of thousands of workers are some of the ongoing challenges Nepal has faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Building diagnostic infrastructure was a priority as there was not a single laboratory able to conduct a PCR test in a population of over 29 million. Samples had to be sent abroad for testing, which delayed reporting, monitoring and treatment. With technical expertise from WHO and financing the from the World Bank, Nepal leveraged its existing influenza testing capacities, resulting in 96 laboratories dedicated to testing COVID-19 becoming operational in under a year.

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The World Bank Group was the first responder - awarding Nepal an International Development Assistance (IDA) Credit of US$ 29 million for COVID-19 support in April 2020.

The COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Project combined the financial and technical strengths of the World Bank, WHO and UNICEF to help Nepal deploy public health measures for test, trace and treat strategies, facilitate community engagement and risk communications, and conduct monitoring and evaluation.

Nepal significantly ramped up its capacity for Ag RDT testing and increased beds for isolation care (7,984 beds), intensive care (2,944 beds) and high-dependency units (3,234 beds), adding oxygen supplies, coupled with training, infrastructure and operational assistance to health facilities.

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The Global Fund supported Nepal with over US$29 million in C19RM funds.

In 2021, when new funding became available from the Global Fund's COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM), Nepal also advanced the procurement of much needed COVID-19 commodities, including PPE and tests, as well as oxygen-related equipment for the plants being installed in all provinces, and the training of health care workers in the use of ventilators and the management of intensive care units.

Oxygen is an essential commodity for the treatment of COVID-19. WHO has maintained strong technical support to help Nepal manage all oxygen-related issues. Unitaid and WHE (WHO Health Emergencies) are currently supporting the hiring of a biomedical engineer, while UNICEF's ACT-Accelerator Supplies Financing Facility (ACT-A SFF) oxygen investments are helping improve access and safe use in newborns and children, including those with COVID-19.

Global Fund C19RM funding procured essential COVID-19 commodities, including over US$ 5.49m for diagnostics, over US$ 3.85m for medical oxygen products, over US$ 308,000 for other therapeutic products, and over US$ 3.01m for PPE.

UNICEF delivered more than 3.5 million gloves, 2.8 million surgical masks, 25K N95 respirators and 50K face shields to Nepal in the first six months of 2021.

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When India was grappling with the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2021, thousands of people were crossing into Nepal, and border districts suffered the brunt of the surge in COVID-19 cases. Critical financial support from ACT-A partners enabled the roll out of a community-based service delivery and patient interface within Nepal's public health structure, as well as capacity building of communities. WHO oriented paramedics on infection prevention and control to support the screening of migrants at entry points along Nepal's borders.

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The ACT-Accelerator Diagnostics Consortium has procured over 1.2 million diagnostic tests (Ag RDTs and PCRs) for Nepal.

Nepal has conducted over four million RT-PCR tests and 524 000 antigen rapid diagnostic tests (Ag RDTs), with a cumulative test positivity rate of 19%. Over 95% of infected people have recovered while over 11 000 people lost their lives to COVID-19.

The World Bank approved an additional US$ 75m in March, 2021, to support procurement and deployment of safe and effective vaccines and ongoing health systems strengthening in Nepal.

Nepal was one of the first countries in Asia to receive a COVAX consignment of vaccines in March 2021. Despite the extremely constrained vaccine manufacturing and supply environment, Nepal has received 14.19 million vaccines through COVAX, neighbouring countries, bilateral procurement, and donations, including 3.15 million doses delivered by UNICEF in Q3. UNICEF and its Nepal Red Cross Society partners have been actively addressing vaccine hesitancy through Unit Action Teams in 28 districts across Nepal, distributing life-saving information, and encouraging COVID-19 preventive practices. The capacity building efforts also include collecting and responding to harmful rumours.

As of mid-September 2021, Nepal has fully vaccinated nearly 18% of its population (5.4 million people) and over 6 million people have received a single dose of vaccine. Nepal has given refugees and other vulnerable groups priority, allocating its doses of the COVID-19 vaccine on humane and inclusive criteria, and epidemiological evidence.

The COVID-19 response in Nepal shows how the different partners of the ACT-Accelerator come together to help countries respond to the pandemic and ultimately save lives.

The ACT-Accelerator Partners:

Gavi The Vaccine Alliance · CEPI · Bill & Melinda Gates foundation · unicef · World Health Organization · wellcome · FIND Diagnosis for all · The Global Fund · Unitaid · World Bank Group