

COVID-19 tests and testing capacity boosted by nearly US\$60 million new funding to FIND

- **New funding announced from Australia (DFAT), Germany (BMBF), Kuwait, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland (SDC) and the Rockefeller Foundation will accelerate efforts in research and development, market readiness and country preparedness to fight COVID-19**
- **Funds awarded to FIND in the context of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator Diagnostics Pillar, as part of the global response to the pandemic**

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND – 26 OCTOBER 2020. The Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND) announced today new funding totalling close to US\$60 million to accelerate urgently needed progress in tests and testing capacity for COVID-19. Support has been confirmed from the governments of Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; DFAT), Germany (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung; BMBF), Kuwait, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; SDC), and the Rockefeller Foundation. A total of US\$1 billion for diagnostic innovation and implementation is urgently needed in the next 12 months.

Testing is vital to the COVID-19 response, enabling countries to trace and contain the virus, as cases rise once again across the world. Affordable, reliable tests are the key to protecting our most vulnerable citizens and safely opening economies. While significant diagnostic progress has been made since the start of the pandemic, we still do not have tests that can easily enable crucial elements of the global economy, including border crossings, hospitality, or tourism (20 million jobs in Thailand, Philippines and Cambodia alone rely on tourism).

Effective testing strategies rely on a portfolio of test types that can be used in different settings and situations. Molecular tests remain the gold standard in terms of performance, but they are mainly laboratory-based, relying on infrastructure and trained personnel to conduct them – which can be a barrier to access in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Due to backlogs, test results can take more than a week, even if the tests themselves generally take around 4 hours to run. Rapid tests to detect the presence of the virus at the point of care are faster and cheaper than molecular tests, but not quite as accurate and still currently require trained health professionals to conduct them. A set of agreements involving multiple global health organizations to make 120 million affordable, quality COVID-19 antigen rapid tests available to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) was [recently announced](#) by the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator. However, if LMICs were testing at the same rate as high-income countries, that number of tests would last just 8 days.

The ACT-Accelerator Diagnostics Pillar is co-convened by FIND and the Global Fund, working closely with WHO and over 30 global health expert partners to accelerate innovation and overcome the technical, financial, and political obstacles to achieving equitable access to effective and timely testing. Such unprecedented global collaboration has enabled development and deployment of the first WHO EUL-approved antigen rapid test within 8 months of the first identification of the virus. In comparison, it took nearly 5 years to develop the first rapid diagnostic test for HIV.

The funding announced today is needed to accelerate efforts in research and development, market readiness and country preparedness to implement COVID-19 testing optimally in different situations. Building on significant funding previously announced from the UK Department for International Development (now the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office), today close to US\$60 million has been committed as follows:

- Australia (DFAT), US\$5,400,000
- Germany (BMBF), US\$11,300,000
- Kuwait, US\$5,000,000
- Netherlands, US\$5,700,000
- Saudi Arabia, US\$10,000,000
- Switzerland (SDC), US\$11,700,000
- Rockefeller Foundation, US\$10,000,000

Sara AlSayed, Assistant Deputy Minister for International Collaborations at the Ministry of Health Saudi Arabia, said: “We rely on world-leading organizations to make this happen. One of which is FIND. An organization that is devoted to the development and delivery of innovative diagnostics globally. It is by solidarity and partnerships with leading organizations such as FIND, that we will be able to combat this pandemic together.”

Ignazio Cassis, Swiss Foreign Minister, said: “Testing the right people, at the right time and with appropriate tests is essential to controlling COVID-19. The ACT-Accelerator is demonstrating the power of global solidarity and multilateral collaboration. Switzerland is proud to support FIND as a Swiss-based organization. 120 million rapid tests have already been secured for low- and middle-income countries – but much more is needed to bring the COVID-19 pandemic under control across the world.”

Pascal Grotenhuis, Director Division of Social Development and Ambassador for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, said: “The government of the Netherlands is proud to support this unprecedented collaboration between global health partners which contribute to equal access to COVID-19 test worldwide.”

Rajiv J. Shah, President of The Rockefeller Foundation, said: “As this pandemic continues, The Rockefeller Foundation remains committed to unlocking and equitably distributing testing and tracing solutions, especially to communities most in need. Our support to FIND and the ACT-Accelerator will enable more equitable access to science-based tools, helping to bend the curve of this pandemic until there’s a safe, effective, and equitably-distributed vaccine.”

Anja Karliczek, Federal Minister of Education and Research in Germany, said: “No single country, no single organization and no single vaccine or test can defeat COVID-19. We must work together to fill critical gaps across the whole healthcare system – including the urgent acceleration of diagnostic innovation and scale up of quality tests.”

Catharina Boehme, CEO of FIND, said: “We are very grateful for the continued support of our long-standing donors alongside support from new donors who are now investing in FIND’s work for the first time. It is clear we will be living with COVID-19 for some time; we cannot afford not to invest in testing, for the health of our populations and our economies.”

The ACT-Accelerator [investment case](#) provides a roadmap that can ensure equitable access to the tests, treatments and vaccines that we need to defeat the COVID-19 pandemic. The Diagnostics Pillar aims to enable affordable, accessible testing for everyone who needs it, including facilitation of the supply of 500 million tests to LMICs within 12 months. To achieve this, US\$6 billion is needed over 12 months – US\$1 billion for diagnostic innovation and implementation, and \$US5 billion for procurement. US\$2 billion of the total is needed before the end of this year. Today’s announcement brings the total committed so far to \$360 million. Over \$10 trillion has already been spent by countries in economic stimulus funding.

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About FIND

FIND is a global non-profit organization that drives innovation in the development and delivery of diagnostics to combat major diseases affecting the world’s poorest populations. Our work bridges R&D to access, overcoming scientific barriers to technology development; generating evidence for regulators and policy-makers; addressing market failures; and enabling accelerated uptake and access to diagnostics in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Since 2003, we have been instrumental in the development of 24 new diagnostic tools used in 150 LMICs. Over 50 million FIND-supported products have been provided to our target markets since the start of 2015. A WHO Collaborating Centre, we work with more than 200 academic, industry, governmental, and civil society partners worldwide, on over 70 active projects that cross six priority disease areas. FIND is committed to a future in which diagnostics underpin treatment decisions and provide the foundation for disease surveillance, control and prevention. For more information, please visit www.finddx.org

About the ACT-Accelerator

The Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, is a new, ground-breaking global collaboration to accelerate the development production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. It was set up in response to a call from G20 leaders in March 2020 and launched by WHO, the European Commission, France and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in April 2020. The ACT-Accelerator is not a decision-making body or a new organization but works to speed up collaborative efforts among existing organizations to end the pandemic. It is a framework for collaboration that has been designed to bring key players around the table with the goal of ending the pandemic as quickly as possible through the accelerated development, equitable allocation, and scaled up delivery of tests, treatments and vaccines, thereby protecting health systems and restoring societies and economies in the near term. It draws on the experience of leading global health organizations which are tackling the world’s toughest health challenges, and who, by working together, are able to unlock new and more ambitious results against COVID-19. Its members share a commitment to ensure all people have access to all the tools needed to defeat COVID-19 and to work with unprecedented levels of partnership to achieve it. The ACT-Accelerator has four areas of work: diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines and the health system connector. Cross cutting all of these is the workstream on Access & Allocation.

The Diagnostics Pillar of the ACT-Accelerator is focused on ensuring that everyone who needs a test can get one. Workstreams span research and development, market readiness, procurement, and country preparedness. Achievements to date include laboratory trainings in partnership with Africa CDC in early February, and a suite of online courses deployed within weeks. Nearly 20 million tests have been procured with the Diagnostics Consortium, ensuring diagnostic access for LMICs and readiness for test-and-treat implementation in these countries. Independent evaluations of antibody tests are also being conducted, as high-quality antibody tests are essential to understand population immunity for future vaccine roll out.

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