

FIND and Unitaid invest US\$ 50 million to speed lifesaving testing and treatment solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic's frontlines

- **New funding to the COVID-19 response across seven complementary grants will help fill testing and treatment gaps**
- **The grants, adapting novel strategies to the needs of 22 low- and middle-income countries, will focus on generating robust evidence for global scale-up**
- **These grants have been made in the context of the diagnostics and the therapeutics pillars of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, designed to rapidly address global inequities in access to COVID-19 testing and treatment**

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND – 9 November 2021. FIND, Unitaid, and partners are joining forces to quickly deliver new end-to-end strategies that will accelerate and enhance improved access to diagnostics and treatment, while continuing to build capacity for test-trace-isolate and treatment efforts to contain the ongoing spread of the virus.

Seven grants aim to address inequities in access to COVID-19 testing and treatment, supporting early adoption of comprehensive care packages in low- and middle-income countries across Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Western Pacific, where testing capacity is insufficient and life-saving treatments are practically unavailable. The grants will generate high-quality evidence to inform the World Health Organization guidelines and national policies addressing the optimal approaches to scaling new testing and treatment solutions.

These investments are being made as promising new medicines are emerging, including the oral antiviral molnupiravir. Effective oral outpatient drugs would offer a widespread, scalable way to stop disease progression, reduce hospitalizations, ease the strain on health systems, and reduce deaths. If these drugs are recommended for use, they could be game changers in the pandemic: simple-to-use oral pills, easier and less expensive to produce in large volumes and easier to deliver in outpatient settings. [Access to COVID-19 Tools \(ACT\) Accelerator](#) partners are anticipating a series of market interventions to ensure that, when proven safe and effective, the medicines are available in sufficient quantities and at the lowest possible price for all countries in need.

Promptly testing people with mild COVID-19 symptoms for rapid treatment initiation depends on strong links between COVID-19 testing and the availability of medicine across every country.

The new FIND–Unitaid co-investment coincides with the ACT-Accelerator's renewed mandate for 2022 to accelerate the development and delivery of critical tools and respond to country needs. The updated [ACT-Accelerator Strategic Plan](#) notes that, for outpatient treatments, approaches

to increasing access to testing and treatment will be key to ensure timely detection and linkage to care, in order to treat patients who may benefit most, including those in high-risk groups and healthcare workers.

The grants will leverage existing laboratory and testing networks to offer additional testing options, such as simple, accurate and affordable antigen-detection rapid diagnostic tests (Ag RDTs) and COVID-19 self-tests. Decentralizing simple, affordable, rapid tests will enable quick linkages to care for vulnerable populations. The grants will also support the introduction of emerging therapeutics as they become recommended including new or repurposed medicines, small molecules, and monoclonal antibodies.

Aurum Institute/KNCV, Clinton Health Access Initiative, Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, FIOTEC, ISGlobal, Partners In Health, and Population Services International have been selected to implement the grants through a transparent, competitive process following a Request for Proposals launched in April this year among Unitaid's current implementing partners. The selected global health organizations will build on their deep expertise and partnership with national authorities and civil society organizations in making health products more available and affordable in low- and middle-income countries for other diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis, and cervical cancer, and will be focusing on five main areas of work: evidence generation, catalytic implementation, enabling environment, demand creation to effective transition, and scale-up.

"As we continue to battle the pandemic on multiple fronts, the stark reality is that millions of people in many countries won't have access to vaccines for months – so test-and-treat strategies are vital to save lives," said Dr Bill Rodriguez, CEO of FIND. "With exciting new treatment options on the near horizon, we must work together to identify the people who need treatment and ensure they have access to effective therapies without delay."

"With the number of COVID-19 reported cases and deaths increasing globally, the pandemic is far from over, and inequities in access to lifesaving health products persist," Unitaid Executive Director, Dr Philippe Duneton, said. "Equitable access to innovative solutions to test and treat all eligible patients, adapted to the needs of low- and middle-income countries, is urgently needed to change the curve of the pandemic and help avert millions of deaths. This new co-investment from Unitaid and FIND will contribute to achieve this goal."

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About FIND

FIND, the global alliance for diagnostics, seeks to ensure equitable access to reliable diagnosis around the world. We connect countries and communities, funders, decision-makers, healthcare providers and developers to spur diagnostic innovation and make testing an integral part of sustainable, resilient health systems. We are working to save 1 million lives through accessible, quality diagnosis, and save US\$1 billion in healthcare costs to patients and health systems. We are co-convenor of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator diagnostics pillar, and a WHO Collaborating Centre for Laboratory Strengthening and Diagnostic Technology Evaluation. For more information, please visit www.finddx.org

About Unitaid

Unitaid is a global health agency engaged in finding innovative solutions to prevent, diagnose, and treat diseases more quickly, cheaply, and effectively, in low- and middle-income countries. Its work includes funding initiatives to address major diseases such as HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis, as well as HIV co-infections and co-morbidities including advanced HIV disease, cervical cancer and hepatitis C, and cross-cutting areas, such as fever management. Unitaid is now applying its expertise to address challenges

in advancing new therapies and diagnostics for the COVID-19 pandemic, serving as a key member of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, co-leading with Wellcome the therapeutics pillar and participating in the diagnostics pillar. Unitaid is hosted by the World Health Organization. For more information, please visit www.unitaid.org

About the ACT-Accelerator

The [Access to COVID-19 Tools \(ACT\) 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 for low and middle-income countries and established the COVAX facility for the equitable procurement and distribution of vaccines in low- and lower-middle-income countries. 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.

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