

Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) and COVAX facility

January 28, 2021

In news : Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) has been playing a major role in Covid-19 vaccine delivery

What is Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) accelerator?

- The Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator is the world's most comprehensive end-to-end solution to ending the acute phase of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic.
- It brings together governments, health organizations, scientists, businesses, civil society, and philanthropists to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines.
- The ACT Accelerator is a framework for collaboration. It is not a decision-making body or a new organization.
- It was set up in response to a call from G20 Leaders in March 2020 and launched by the WHO, European Commission, France and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in April 2020.

What is the goal of the ACT-Accelerator?

The goal of the ACT Accelerator is to end the COVID-19 pandemic as quickly as possible by reducing COVID-19 mortality and severe disease through the accelerated development, equitable allocation, and scaled-up delivery of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to reduce mortality and severe disease

Who are the partners of it?

The participating global health organizations are: the World Health Organization (WHO), the Coalition for Epidemic

Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), Unitaid, the Foundation for Innovative New Diagnostics (FIND), the Wellcome Trust, the World Bank Group and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

How is it organized?

The ACT Accelerator is co-convened by nine leading global health organizations. It is not a new legal or decision-making entity but has been set up as a support structure to enable the work of the delivery partners and facilitate cross-cutting knowledge sharing.

Four pillars of ACT

The ACT Accelerator comprises four pillars: Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Vaccines (also known as COVAX), with the Health Systems Connector pillar working across the other three. Each pillar is managed by 2-3 partner agencies. Additionally, WHO leads on the cross-cutting Access and Allocation workstream.

- **The Diagnostics pillar** is co-led by FIND and the Global Fund, with involvement by WHO.
 - It aims to rapidly identify game-changing new diagnostics, and bring 500 million affordable, high quality rapid diagnostic tests to market by mid-2021, for populations in low- and middle-income countries.
- **The Therapeutics pillar** is led by Unitaid and the Wellcome Trust, with involvement by WHO.
 - It seeks to develop, manufacture, procure and distribute 245 million treatments for populations in low-and middle-income countries within 12 months.
- **The Vaccines pillar** – also known as COVAX – is led by CEPI, Gavi and WHO.

- Its role is to ensure that vaccines are developed as rapidly as possible and manufactured at the right volumes – without compromising on safety – and delivered to those that need them most.
- **By early 2021, its goal is to secure 2 billion doses through the COVAX Facility**, an actively managed portfolio of vaccine candidates across a broad range of technologies.
- All participating countries, regardless of income levels, will have equal access to these vaccines once they are developed.
- **The Health Systems** connector pillar works across the other three pillars and is convened by the World Bank, Global Fund and WHO.
 - It aims to strengthen the health systems and local community networks that are struggling to cope with COVID-19, and to unlock health system bottlenecks that might hamper the delivery and implementation of new and expanded COVID-19 tools.
 - It also aims to ensure sufficient supplies of essential Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and medical oxygen in low- and middle-income countries to protect frontline workers and to enhance the capacity of health systems to save lives.

Who will get access to the tools developed as part of the ACT Accelerator?

- A key principle underpinning the ACT Accelerator is the need for equitable distribution of COVID-19 tools to those most who need them most, as upheld through the Access and Allocation workstream.
- The fair allocation mechanism for COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility is based on the idea that whether a person can access tests, treatment and a vaccine for COVID-19 should not be determined by where

they live

COVAX Facility

- **The COVAX Facility is the global procurement mechanism of COVAX.**
- **Coordinated and legally administered by Gavi(Vaccine Alliance)**, the COVAX Facility is making investments across a broad portfolio of promising vaccine candidates (including those being supported by CEPI) to make sure at-risk investment in manufacturing happens now.
- By pooling purchasing power from all countries that participate, the COVAX Facility will have rapid access to COVID-19 vaccine doses as soon as they receive regulatory approval.
- Guided by a fair allocation framework developed by WHO, the COVAX Facility will equitably distribute these doses to help protect the most at-risk groups in all participating countries. And ensuring all participating economies' perspectives are part of the solution will be critical to shaping and implementing a COVAX Facility that works for everyone, everywhere.