The COVID-19 pandemic remains a crisis on an unprecedented scale. National governments continue to grapple with the challenges of implementing public health measures, maintaining essential health and social services, and reaching populations—especially the hardest to reach—with COVID-19 tools. New variants continue to emerge as the pandemic persists.

Bringing its technical expertise in supply, logistics and programming, UNICEF is the lead implementation partner of the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A). Working with ACT-A partners, national governments and communities, UNICEF is working to address the stark inequalities that exist in access to COVID-19 vaccines, tests, treatments and personal protective equipment (PPE).

In 2021, UNICEF shipped more than 560 million COVID-19 doses to 144 countries and has provided in-country technical and financial support in over 130 countries to turn vaccines into vaccinations. Yet more needs to be done to end this pandemic, especially in humanitarian situations.

The 2022 ACT-A Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal seeks to raise US$1.3 billion. We urgently require funds to:

- support in-country delivery of COVID-19 vaccines with a focus on interventions that strengthen primary health care systems
- deliver diagnostic tests and related technical assistance
- strengthen oxygen systems and deliver novel and repurposed therapeutics
- provide front-line workers with PPE and supplies to work safely
- support risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) to promote the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments.

KEY PLANNED RESULTS

- 4 billion vaccine doses to be delivered via ACT-A partners, including UNICEF
- 988 million diagnostic tests to be delivered via ACT-A partners, including UNICEF
- 120 million COVID-19 cases treated with support from ACT-A partners, including UNICEF
- 2.7 million health workers protected with PPE with support from ACT-A partners, including UNICEF

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

US$ 1.3 billion
HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND NEEDS

Since the start of the pandemic, 629 million COVID-19 cases and 6.6 million deaths have been reported globally.² Yet these figures likely under-report the devastation, especially in low- and middle-income countries, where data availability, surveillance and testing capacity are limited. Disruptions to education and essential health services remain significant.³ The COVID-19 crisis is exacerbating the vulnerabilities of children and families everywhere – and fueling inequalities.

As the pandemic continues, many national governments are struggling to sustain implementation of public health measures to reduce transmission of COVID-19 and deliver on their broader response plans to address COVID-19 and its consequences. Weak health systems lack capacity to deliver COVID-19 tools at scale. Greater support is also needed to work with communities and civil society to address COVID-19 misinformation, combat vaccine hesitancy and increase the adoption of vaccines, tests and treatments.

While we laud the significant achievements of the ACT-A collaboration so far,⁴ we note that access to COVID-19 tools remains grossly unequal. As of 4 November 2022, 19 per cent of people in low-income countries have completed the initial COVID-19 vaccination protocol, compared with 75 per cent of people in high-income countries.⁵ In fragile and humanitarian contexts, populations in need are still not being reached effectively. Such inequality is not only unjust, but also prolongs the pandemic, as new variants emerge in settings where vaccine coverage is low and COVID-19 infections continue to spread.

Urgent attention is needed to ensure that people affected by humanitarian crises and other marginalized and vulnerable populations have access to COVID-19 tools.⁶

STORY FROM THE FIELD

UNICEF and partners continue working to keep children and their families safe and healthy through the pandemic. Rolling out COVID-19 vaccines, tests, treatments and PPE are a critical part of an integrated response to COVID-19.

In Nepal, reaching the most remote areas of the country is vital in helping to stop the spread of the pandemic. UNICEF has been working closely with the Government and key partners such as Gavi to provide technical and logistical support at federal, provincial/district and local levels for effective vaccine and cold chain management.

Assessing, expanding and strengthening the country’s cold chain capacity is important to keep vaccines safe and at the correct temperatures throughout their journey. This has included installation of cold rooms, refrigerators and freezers in vaccine storage facilities at the central, provincial, district and local levels, and the provision of refrigerated containers cold boxes and carriers for transportation.

Read more about this story here

Forty-five-year-old Dhaula Devi Mahar receives the COVID-19 vaccine on 4 August 2021, at the Pipalchauri Health Post in Duhun, a remote part of Darchula District in Nepal's far-west.
UNICEF’s strategy to deliver on its ACT-A commitments complements the agency's ongoing work to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic, deliver essential health and social services, and build more resilient systems. In 2022, through this appeal, UNICEF will focus on the following key priorities:

In all low- and middle-income countries where UNICEF provides in-country delivery support, UNICEF will provide procurement, supply and technical assistance to:

- The Vaccine Pillar – to turn vaccines into vaccinations, UNICEF will prioritize high-risk, hard-to-reach groups, including humanitarian populations, and work to reduce inequities in countries. When supporting countries in vaccine delivery, UNICEF will focus on activities and approaches that simultaneously strengthen the health system, such as implementing digital immunization records and improving the overall management of the supply chain.

- Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) (part of the Health Systems and Response Connector) – to build the capacities of civil society, community health actors and the social service workforce in relevant programmatic areas, such as community engagement and interpersonal communication. UNICEF will support people-centred, community-led engagement campaigns to increase trust, promote the adoption of COVID-19 tools and address vaccine hesitancy.

- Personal Protective Equipment (part of the Health Systems and Response Connector) – to procure and deliver quality PPE to enable front-line workers to deliver health care safely, with a focus on the 92 countries eligible for the COVAX Advanced Market Commitment (AMC). UNICEF has PPE stock pre-positioned and available for delivery to countries in need, subject to funding.

In the most vulnerable countries with ongoing humanitarian crises and in countries with critical needs, UNICEF will provide procurement, supply and technical assistance to:

- The Diagnostics Pillar – to support procurement and supply of diagnostic tests to meet acute gaps for COVID-19 testing. Where needed, diagnostics will be accompanied by technical assistance to support rapid scale-up, particularly at the community and primary health care levels.

- The Therapeutics Pillar – to support procurement and supply of oxygen equipment and provision of technical support to plan, build and strengthen oxygen systems.

To enable an effective coordinated response, UNICEF will invest in:

- Global coordination and technical support – to enable effective coordination with ACT-A partners and across headquarters, regional offices and country offices to roll out COVID-19 tools and to build a stronger foundation for future public health emergency preparedness and response. In doing so, UNICEF will have greater capacity to provide timely strategic, technical, advocacy, communications, and partnerships support.

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This appeal is aligned with the revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, which are based on global standards and norms for humanitarian action.
FUNDING REQUIREMENTS IN 2022

UNICEF’s 2022 ACT-A HAC appeal of US$1.3 billion has been defined in consultation with UNICEF regional and country offices. Building on the results achieved last year, we double-down our focus on our two key programmatic priorities: 1) to scale up the in-country delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, including in humanitarian settings; and 2) to increase adoption of, and trust in, vaccines and other COVID-19 tools in all low- and middle-income countries.

For Vaccines, the funding requirement remains at US$914 million. In 2022, UNICEF will continue to focus on humanitarian settings and on closing the equity gap in vaccine coverage for the most vulnerable.

For RCCE, the funding requirement remains at US$94 million. UNICEF has a unique role to play in: 1) scaling up capacity to implement tailored evidence based RCCE interventions, and 2) strengthening engagement with civil society and communities to address vaccine hesitancy and increase adoption of health behaviours to curb the pandemic.

For PPE, the funding requirement has been revised from US$88 million to US$130 million to reflect the expanded country coverage and scope to meet the needs of 92 countries to support the PPE needs of vaccinators, in addition to other frontline and healthcare workers providing COVID-19 treatment, testing and care to patients.

For Diagnostics, the funding requirement has been reduced from US$75 million to US$33 million to reflect the lower than anticipated demand for tests and will shift to pilot test and treat strategies.

For Therapeutics, the funding requirement remains the same at US$92 million, as we seek to continue addressing critical needs for oxygen systems in 20 priority countries with humanitarian situations (and in exceptional cases may support urgent needs in other low- and middle-income countries).

Direct funding to UNICEF will help ensure efficient and timely support for the last-mile delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments to those in need, and PPE to protect health workers. Contributions through this ACT-A HAC appeal (as well as through other UNICEF fundraising channels) will be critical to ensuring that the most vulnerable, crisis-affected populations are reached with COVID-19 tools, and that progress towards global ACT-A targets is accelerated. UNICEF will prioritize strategies that strengthen the health system while also ensuring efficient delivery of COVID-19 tools.

Who to contact for further information:

Aboubacar Kampo
Director of Health, Programme Division
T +1 212 326 7540
akampo@unicef.org

Manuel Fontaine
Director, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS)
T +1 212 326 7163
mfontaine@unicef.org

June Kunugi
Director, Public Partnership Division (PPD)
T +1 212 326 7118
jkunugi@unicef.org
UNICEF is supporting low- and middle-income countries to access, purchase and receive the delivery of key COVID-19 supplies via UNICEF's Supplies Financing Facility, which is co-convened by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) and the World Health Organization (WHO). UNICEF is also the lead implementation partner for end-to-end procurement, supply and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines. UNICEF also co-convenes the Health Systems and Response connector with The Global Fund, World Bank and WHO.

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For 2022, based on UNICEF’s updated global COVID-19 vaccine delivery cost model, it is predicted that low- and middle-income countries can realistically administer 4,260,000,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine (including two doses of primary series and one booster dose). These predictions are based on best historic absorption data for each country and assume only a proportion of the country’s target for primary series coverage will be targeted for boosters.

The ACT-A Diagnostics Pillar aims to support the procurement of 988 million tests to advance testing rates to a minimum of 100 tests per 100,000 individuals per day from October 2021 to September 2022.

As countries move from managing COVID-19 as an acute emergency to integration into longer-term disease control programmes, the ACT-Accelerator partnership is adjusting its ways of working to fully integrate ACT-A into regular programming and operations in 2023.

UNICEF provides in-country delivery support to all low- and middle-income countries, with the exception of Bulgaria, China, Romania and the Russian Federation. Low- and middle-income countries are defined using the World Bank classification of economies. For this 2022 HAC appeal, the needs assessment only included countries that have not achieved 70 per cent population coverage of COVID-19 vaccination. In agreement with GAVI, UNICEF will complement country delivery support to include: delivery costs needed for the Humanitarian Buffer and humanitarian settings; support to AMC countries for targeted emergency needs through its UNICEF country offices; and support for non-Gavi-eligible low- and middle-income countries. By doing so, UNICEF will leverage its existing role and expertise in emergency settings and build on its ability to move funding quickly to country level through its country offices and fill critical gaps.

6. For PPE, the scope of the country delivery support to include countries rolling out COVID-19 vaccines to support the PPE needs of vaccinators, in addition to other frontline and healthcare workers. Therefore, UNICEF increased the PPE target to 92 AMC countries to align to the expanded scope.

9. Priority will be given to countries with HRPs and where situations of concern are deemed “Critical risk” or “High risk.” Given lower-than-anticipated demand, the diagnostics targets have been reduced to 11 million, and the programme response will shift to pilot test and treat strategies.

10. Given lower-than-anticipated demand, the diagnostics target has been reduced to 5 countries which will be chosen from the following: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, the Sudan and Yemen. The programme strategy will shift to pilot test and treat.

11. Priority will be given to countries based on review of requests by the global and regional technical team, where additional resources can have immediate catalytic impact.

12. Priority will be given to countries with HRPs and where situations of concerns are deemed “Critical risk” or “High risk.” For PPE, the country scope expanded in 2022 to include countries rolling out COVID-19 vaccines to support the PPE needs of vaccinators, in addition to other frontline and healthcare workers providing COVID-19 treatment, testing and care to patients. Therefore, UNICEF increased the PPE target to 81 million days’ worth of PPE to align with the expanded universe of 92 countries eligible for the COVAX AMC.

13. Both antigen rapid diagnostic tests and molecular PCR tests.


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21. Risk communication and community engagement interventions include engaging with communities, influencers, local groups, media and front-line workers for behaviour change. It also involves the creation of engagement platforms, participation, feedback and accountability mechanisms, as well as capacity building and evidence generation (e.g., via social listening, monitoring of rumours, monitoring uptake of practices). There is a focus on sustained community trust.

22. The data source for this indicator will be: COVID-19 Behavioural Indicators - Collective Service for Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) (rcce-collective.net). In January 2021, the percentage of individuals who would get vaccinated once a vaccine is available was 69.5 per cent, and by October 2021, this had increased to 79.3 per cent. By June 2022, this had increased to 90.2 per cent. UNICEF contributes to the achievement of this indicator with partners.
