

BRIEF: Civil society and community representation in the ACT-A – Update July 23rd 2020

Background

The Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), is a collaboration to accelerate development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. Within the ACT-A there are:

- four main pillars of work – Diagnostics; Therapeutics; Vaccines; and the Health System Connector
- a cross-cutting access and allocation workstream, led by WHO to develop the mechanisms needed to ensure the fair and equitable allocation of these tools
- and a Facilitation Council, which will be responsible for providing the pillars with support and guidance on key strategic, policy, and financial issues.

More information on ACT-A can be found: <https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator>

When the ACT-A started in May, the civil society and community representatives to the Boards of several Global Health Institutions leading it (Global Fund, UNITAID, Gavi and others) advocated for embedded representation for community and civil society voices in each pillar and workstream and their sub-working groups. This has been more successful and more welcomed within the Diagnostics and Therapeutics Pillars and interim civil society and communities representatives have been in place for several weeks. Unfortunately, civil society and community representation remains in early stages in the Health Systems Connector and is negligible in the Vaccines Pillar.

Representatives of civil society and communities on the Boards of Global Fund, Unitaid and Gavi, and as the Civil Society Engagement Mechanism of UHC2030 (CSEM) wrote two letters to all organisations involved in ACT-A calling for the meaningful engagement of civil society and communities across all the ACT-A pillars. A copy of the letters, and the response from the organisations can be found here: <https://www.globalfundadvocatesnetwork.org/tools-for-advocacy/covid-19-resources/act-accelerator-act-a/>

Civil society and community representatives in the diagnostic and therapeutics pillars are currently conducting or are developing open, accountable and transparent selection processes for next phase representation (for one year) within these pillars and their sub-groups. New next phase reps guided by a clear ToR will be in place by the end of August in these two pillars.

Cohesive, supported Community and Civil Society engagement in the ACT-A

Building on leadership already shown in these early months by generating civil society and community engagement and representation in the Access to COVID Technologies Accelerator (ACT-A), International Civil Society Support and WACI Health have identified in this vision document, a role for them to create two distinct platforms that would serve to:

- 1) convene and support the identified civil society and community representatives in ACT-A and
- 2) provide a platform for engagement for broader civil society and communities with ACT-A civil society and communities representatives; facilitate broader, global collaboration by bringing the expertise in civil society and communities to inform the work of the representatives in ACT-A; and provide a space for information sharing, consultation and cohesive action and advocacy.

With support from other partners such as StopAIDS UK and the UHC2030 CS Engagement Mechanism (CSEM), ICSS and WACI Health have already been doing this work since late May – convening leading voices, interim and now selected representatives on a regular basis to discuss key issues and this is coalescing into a strong collaboration between CSO and community representatives to Global Health Institutions and CSO and community representatives within the ACT-A framework.

We also held a fully public call on June 18th to share information with the broader health community that was attended by close to 200 CSO's and community organizations. The next call is planned for August 6th.

There is currently no funding that has been made available for this work. A “vision” document that elaborates on this support of ACT-A representatives and broader community and civil society is available, please contact Katy Wright at kkw@icssupport.org

Current civil society and community representation across ACT-A

Diagnostics Pillar

Within the Diagnostics Pillar there are four Working Groups:

1. Research and Development of Tests and Digital Tools
2. Market Readiness

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3. Supply, Pooled Procurement & Equitable Distribution of Tests
4. Country Preparedness

There are also two workstreams:

1. Data Foundation and Modelling
2. Private Sector

There are currently interim representatives working across all of the workstreams of the pillar and an open call for representatives will be issued shortly (end of July) for 2 representatives in each Working Group, 1 in both workstreams alongside no more than five general and technical members of which one will be the facilitative organization. All together, they will compose the Community Engagement & Advocacy workstream.

Contact: Katy Wright, ICSS - kkw@icssupport.org

Therapeutics Pillar

Six representatives will advocate on behalf of civil society and communities across the workstreams of the therapeutics pillar:

1. Rapid evidence assessment of candidates
2. Market preparedness
3. Adequate deployment in all countries
4. Costing/ financing (cross-cutting)

Civil society & communities representatives will support the core activities of workstreams 1-3. It is expected that two representatives (one civil society and one community representative) will support each workstream with all representatives inputting into the costing/ financing workstream.

An open recruitment process took place in July 2020 with Brook Baker, Rachael Crockett and Felipe de Carvalho selected as the civil society representatives to the therapeutics pillar. Gracia Violeta Ross was selected as a community representative with [an open call for an additional two community representatives open to people living with COVID19](#) (deadline: 26 July 2020)

Contact: Wim Vandeveld, GNP+ - wvandeveld@gnpplus.net

Vaccines Pillar

Civil society and communities have no formal representation in the vaccines pillar. Civil society is calling for the vaccines Pillar and COVAX Facility architecture to include:

- civil society representatives in the ACT- Vaccines Pillar overall coordination group
- civil society representatives within each of the ACT- Vaccines Pillar workstreams: a) Development and Manufacturing; b) Procurement and Delivery; c) Policy and Allocation

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- civil society representatives in the COVAX Facility governance structure, when presented to the Gavi board meeting on 30th July 2020.
- civil society representatives in WHO Allocations Framework process

The request is for between 2 and 3 representatives in each of these areas for a likely 11-15 CSO and communities representatives in total. Contact person: Karrar Karrar, Save the Children - K.Karrar@savethechildren.org.uk

Health System Strengthening Pillar

Within the pillar there are seven workstreams:

1. Health Financing
2. Community-led Responses
3. Protecting Frontline Healthcare Workers
4. Integrated Data Management
5. Supply Chain
6. Private Sector
7. Clinical Care

There are currently interim civil society and community representatives who are primarily involved in the community-led responses work of the pillar but will meet with colleagues to plan a process for the broader engagement of civil society and communities across the pillar. Contact person: Justin Koonin, ACON - president@acon.org.au

Cross-cutting access and allocation workstream and Facilitation Council

Civil society colleagues at ICSS and WACI Health are following up with WHO for further information on how civil society and communities will be engaged in both platforms. It is important to ensure formal representation in the Facilitation Council to input into strategic discussions, contribute to the monitoring of the activities of the pillars and support with communication to the broader civil society and communities.

Contact: Katy Wright, ICSS - kkw@icssupport.org

Further Background information on CS & Community Engagement in the ACT-Accelerator:

Recording of GFAN and CSEM's co-hosted conversation on ACT-A for communities and civil society <https://youtu.be/RrPgP2SrVI8>

Background slides from June 18 CSO call

<https://www.globalfundadvocatesnetwork.org/about/notes-from-gfan-calls>

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Video: A guide to the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator:

<https://www.who.int/initiatives/act-accelerator>

Overview: [https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/access-to-covid-19-tools-\(act\)-accelerator](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/access-to-covid-19-tools-(act)-accelerator)

To be developed! A digital home for CS and Community Engagement and Advocacy on COVID-19 and the ACT Accelerator – www.covid19advocacy.org