

The Rockefeller Foundation Announces Grant to Expand Access to COVID-19 Testing and Tracing in Africa

NAIROBI, KENYA, 28 JANUARY 2021—The Rockefeller Foundation has announced a new grant of US\$12 million to the Africa Public Health Foundation to help expand the geographic coverage of testing and to strengthen contact tracing for COVID-19 in Africa through the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC).

“Equitable access to testing and tracing is essential to rapidly identify and respond to COVID-19 outbreaks until a vaccine is widely available to all,” said Rajiv J. Shah, President of The Rockefeller Foundation. “One year into the COVID-19 pandemic, too many people still do not have access to the tools that they need to keep themselves, their families, and their communities healthy and safe. We’re pleased to work with the Africa Public Health Foundation and Africa CDC to catalyse a more efficient and inclusive response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic across the continent.”

This funding will support a broader effort to accelerate equitable access to testing technologies, increase testing of asymptomatic persons, and reducing community transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in the sub-Saharan Africa region.

Until date, more than three million COVID-19 cases have been reported in Africa, with the current daily average of new cases in the second wave surpassing that of the first wave.

Testing and tracing remain two of the strongest public health interventions for containing COVID-19 on this continent of about 1.3 billion people. Yet, only a little above 30 million tests have been reported since the beginning of the pandemic. By scaling up testing and tracing, health authorities on the continent will have access to more reliable epidemiologic data to advise governments, businesses and the public on how to better manage the pandemic and mitigate its socioeconomic impact.

“Testing is the number one tool to fight this pandemic because without testing we will be fighting blindly,” said Dr John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC. “We also need to trace people who are infected, isolate them and treat them. By supporting African Union Member States to do more testing and tracing to identify and isolate infected persons, we will be able to control the virus and limit transmission.”

Through the [Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing \(PACT\)](#), an initiative rolled out in August last year, Africa CDC is establishing partnerships across the globe to mobilize technical, material and financial resources to support African Union Member States in expanding testing, tracing and treatment for COVID-19. This grant will contribute to the implementation of PACT across the continent.

The grant will also help increase access to testing in urban and rural areas, strengthen community level contact tracing, enhance data infrastructure and accelerate screening and case finding in high-risk populations.

Dr Francisco Songane, Interim CEO of the Africa Public Health Foundation said: “The Africa Public Health Foundation is sincerely grateful for the leadership and support of the team at The Rockefeller Foundation. It is our mission to forge partnerships and mobilise

resources for Africa CDC. In facing the COVID-19 pandemic, this kind of collaboration is needed more than ever.”

“Scaling up testing and tracing for the most at-risk populations is a critical piece of The Rockefeller Foundation’s efforts to support an equitable pandemic response on the continent,” said William Asiko, Managing Director of the Africa Regional Office, The Rockefeller Foundation. “As we await widespread vaccinations, investing in testing, tracing, and public education about physical distancing and mask-wearing are the best tools we have to address Africa’s most urgent needs now and strengthen the systems we need to protect ourselves from future threats.”

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Note to the Editors

About the Africa Public Health Foundation

The Africa Public Health Foundation exists to forge partnerships and mobilise resources to support critical public health initiatives across the continent, in support of Africa CDC. Established in September 2019, APHF is mobilising flexible funds to accelerate the Africa CDC-led COVID-19 response and the initiatives that will follow, with the aim of strengthening public health systems. For more information and to sign up for APHF’s newsletter, please visit <http://www.aphf.africa>.

About Africa CDC

Africa CDC is a specialized technical institution of the African Union, which supports Member States in their efforts to strengthen health systems and improve surveillance, emergency response, prevention, and control of diseases. For more information, [visit the Africa CDC website](#).

About The Rockefeller Foundation

The Rockefeller Foundation advances new frontiers of science, data, and innovation to solve global challenges related to health, food, power, and economic mobility. As a science-driven philanthropy focused on building collaborative relationships with partners and grantees, The Rockefeller Foundation seeks to inspire and foster large-scale human impact that promotes the well-being of humanity throughout the world by identifying and accelerating breakthrough solutions, ideas, and conversations. For more information, sign up for our newsletter at rockefellerfoundation.org and follow us on Twitter [@RockefellerFdn](#).

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