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NEWS FOR AND ABOUT THE GLOBAL FUND PARTNERSHIP AND COVID-19

With a global shortage of medical commodities needed for COVID-19, such as test kits, reagents, and personal protective equipment for health-care and other essential workers, the news that WHO has listed the first two diagnostic tests for emergency use during the COVID-19 pandemic is a welcome step towards enabling countries that are struggling to get their hands on testing-related items, in particular. The tests are the genisig Real-Time PCR Coronavirus (COVID-19), from Primerdesign, United Kingdom, which WHO says is an open system more suitable for laboratories with moderate sample testing capacity, and the cobas® SARS-CoV-2 for use on the cobas® 6800/8800 Systems, from Roche, United States of America, which is a closed-system assay for larger laboratories.

The fact that WHO has listed the tests for emergency use means they have met WHO quality-assurance standards, can be supplied by U.N. and other agencies, and will help countries to increase their testing capacity. The listings are under the Emergency Use Listing Procedure (EUL), which exists to expedite the availability of diagnostics needed in emergency public-health situations, WHO says.

[See WHO's full news release....](#) 'My Hero is You': a COVID-19 story book for children (in 14 languages)

On April 9, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings published a free, electronic story book for children ages 6 to 11, about COVID-19. It is designed to be read to children by or with the support of a parent or caregiver.

Called My Hero is You, How kids can fight COVID-19! the book features a fantasy creature, Ario, who

explains how children can protect themselves, their families and friends from coronavirus and how to manage difficult emotions when confronted with a new and rapidly changing reality.

The story was developed after a global survey was conducted in Arabic, English, Italian, French and Spanish, involving 1700 people, to assess children's psychosocial and mental health needs during the COVID-19 outbreak. Using the survey results, the books authors developed the range of topics that the book would cover. Children, parents and caregivers participated in the review of and feedback on the story. "This is a story developed for and by children around the world," the new release says.

 WHO lists two COVID-19 diagnostic tests for emergency use

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The book was originally published in the six United Nations languages – English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish – but PDFs of the story are also available on the Inter-agency's website in Ukrainian, Bahasa Malay, German, Turkish, Danish, Portuguese, Burmese, Sinhala, Greek, and Italian.

[See the news release on the WHO website...](#)

[Download any of the available language versions from the Interagency committee website...](#)

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French development agency announces loan-dominated initiative

On the same day as the Board decision was announced, the French President along with his government's development agency, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), launched 'COVID-19 – Health in common' (COVID-19 – santé en commun), a €1.2-billion initiative in response to the worldwide public health crisis caused by the pandemic. The AFD's news release states that the program is part of "a European effort to mount a targeted, partnership-based response to this unprecedented crisis in developing countries". The initiative is intended to complement "the work of multilateral and European donors and prioritizes the African continent".

The French plan includes €150 million in donations and €1 billion in the form of loans, to address "short-term challenges facing partner countries and development banks". The beneficiaries of the plan are intended to be the 19 priority countries within France's aid landscape, as well as Madagascar, the Comores, Haiti and the Middle East. The funds are targeting not only central governments, the AFD says, but civil society organizations, public development banks, the private sector and French stakeholders in global health.

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