# Separating fact from fiction: Finding reputable sources

- It's important that journalists report on COVID-19 vaccines in a responsible way that is based on reputable and evidence-based research
- When journalists don't report responsibly, they could misinform the public, which can be a matter of life or death
- "The media have to report that at this point there are undoubtedly far more questions than answers about any of the vaccine candidates. Please do not report with certainty where certainty simply does not exist." – Gary Schwitzer, veteran health journalist

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

# How journalists' reporting on Covid-19 should be:

- Be ethical and responsible
- Be socially responsible
- Refrain from being sensationalist or alarmist
- Communicate facts and truthful information on the disease
- Use reliable, scientific, truthful, and verified sources
- Quote scientists, researchers, public health professionals, academics, and specialists in other disciplines who can clarify public concerns about the situation
- Truthfully report on measures that help contain and/or mitigate the spread of the disease
- Report on the jobs performed by health workers and their situation, given their critical role in responding to the epidemic
- Report on patients recovering, communities taking measures to tackle the disease, or countries that have exemplary approaches
- Provide reporting that contributes to solutions

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

# Reputable sources to use

- National, state, or local ministries of health
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- National authorities in other government sectors
- Governmental centres of excellence in health
- Institutes of public health
- Universities
- Schools of public health
- National and international institutions investigating the virus and the disease
- Academic reports and papers
- Research hospitals
- Research institutions
- Academic publications
- Web sites with academic papers:

  PubMed http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed

  Science direct: http://www.sciencedirect.com/

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

# Basic questions journalists should ask when covering new research

- How does this study fit into the big picture?
- How does it compare to other studies on the same issue?
- Is it really new?
- Who sponsored it?
- How does it add to previous research?
- What is  the clinical relevance, if any, of the study.
- How will this change a doctor's practice or the way a reader might choose to behave?
- Does the study's findings matter to readers right now, and, if so, how?

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

# Basic questions journalists should ask when covering new research

- How does this study fit into the big picture?
- How does it compare to other studies on the same issue?
- Is it really new?
- Who sponsored it?
- How does it add to previous research?
- What is  the clinical relevance, if any, of the study.
- How will this change a doctor's practice or the way a reader might choose to behave?
- Does the study's findings matter to readers right now, and, if so, how?

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

# Understanding the Covid-19 vaccine science

## What is a COVID-19 vaccine?

A vaccine is intended to provide immunity against COVID-19.

In general, vaccines contain weakened or inactive parts of a particular organism that triggers an immune response within the body. This weakened version will not cause the disease in the person receiving the vaccine, but it will prompt their immune system to respond.

Some vaccines require multiple doses, given weeks or months apart. This is sometimes needed to allow for the production of long-lived antibodies and development of memory cells.

In this way, the body is trained to fight the specific disease-causing organism, building up memory against the pathogen so it can fight it in the future.

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

# Understanding the Covid-19 vaccine science

## What is herd immunity?

When a lot of people in a community are vaccinated, the pathogen has a hard time circulating because most of the people it encounters are immune. So the more that others are vaccinated, the less likely people who are unable to be protected by vaccines are at risk of even being exposed to the harmful pathogens. This is called herd immunity.

But no single vaccine provides 100% protection, and herd immunity does not provide full protection to those who cannot safely be vaccinated. But with herd immunity, these people will have substantial protection, thanks to those around them being vaccinated. Vaccinating not only protects yourself, but also protects those in the community who are unable to be vaccinated.

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

# Understanding the Covid-19 vaccine science

## What process is followed before a vaccine is given to the public?

Before COVID-19 vaccines can be delivered:

1) The vaccines must be proven safe and effective in large clinical trials.
2) A series of independent reviews of the efficacy and safety evidence is required.
3) The evidence must also be reviewed for the purpose of policy recommendations on how the vaccines should be used.
4) An external panel of experts convened by WHO, called the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE), analyzes the results from clinical trials.
5) The panel then recommends whether and how the vaccines should be used.
6) Officials in individual countries decide whether to approve the vaccines for national use and develop policies for how to use the vaccines in their country based on the WHO recommendations.

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

# Understanding the Covid-19 vaccine science

## What steps are taken to ensure the COVID-19 vaccine is safe?

COVID-19 vaccines go through a rigorous, multi-stage testing process, including large trials that involve tens of thousands of people. These trials, which include people at high risk for COVID-19, are specifically designed to identify any common side effects or other safety concerns.

Once a clinical trial shows that a COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective, a series of independent reviews of the efficacy and safety evidence is required, including regulatory review and approval in the country where the vaccine is manufactured, before WHO considers a vaccine product for prequalification.

An external panel of experts convened by WHO analyzes the results from clinical trials, along with evidence on the disease, age groups affected, risk factors for disease, and other information. The panel recommends whether and how the vaccines should be used.

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

# Questions that need to be addressed in COVID-19 vaccine access

- Who should receive the first dose and subsequent doses of a vaccine?
- Who decides who is allowed into the queue to receive the vaccine and in what order?
- What special advantages are given to the country where a vaccine is developed, if any?
- Will countries where clinical trials are being conducted be given access to vaccines that have been developed elsewhere? The Oxford vaccine, for example, was developed in the United Kingdom but is undergoing trials in Brazil and South Africa.
- To what extent will wealthier countries crowd out poorer ones?
- Will countries let geopolitics intrude, sharing the vaccine with allies while forcing vulnerable populations in adversary countries to the back of the line?
- Vaccine developers need to be transparent by providing compelling, evidence-based information for the public to have confidence that available vaccines are safe and effective. The vaccine uptake among the world's population must be high enough for life to return to the pre-pandemic era.

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid

What is our responsibility to our communities as journalists?

African Alliance

VACCINE ADVOCACY RESOURCE GROUP

Norwegian People's Aid