Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (hereafter referred to as “Gavi”) is a public-private health partnership established in 2000 that aims to save children’s lives and protect people’s health by increasing equitable access to immunization in lower-income countries. Gavi brings together governments and vaccine manufacturers in both industrialized and developing countries, and collaborates with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the World Bank, public health and research institutions, civil society organizations, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private philanthropists. Since Gavi’s inception, it has supported the immunization of 760 million children and prevented over 13 million deaths from infectious diseases.1 Gavi has been instrumental in bringing down the cost, for the first time, of the full immunization schedule for childhood vaccines to less than US$16 for low-income countries, representing a decrease of more than 50 per cent in price since 2011.2

THE PARTNERSHIP
UNICEF is a founding partner of the Gavi Alliance, one of four permanent Gavi board members, and is a strategic partner within the Alliance. UNICEF’s work with Gavi has been highly synergistic, enabling the partnership to expand its reach. Gavi’s goals are in line with UNICEF’s Immunization Roadmap, which outlines UNICEF’s long-term vision and strategic priorities for immunization, based on the organization’s comparative advantage. UNICEF’s goal is to realize the rights of every woman and child, especially the most disadvantaged, to immunization. UNICEF and Gavi are aligned toward achieving equity, accelerating innovative approaches to close the immunization gap, and supporting market-shaping efforts to make vaccines more affordable and accessible to low-income countries, as well as promoting the adoption of targeted approaches to scale up vaccine introduction and coverage.

THE VALUE
Immunization is recognized as one of the most cost-effective, efficient and successful health investments in history. Concerted efforts have lifted global immunization coverage from around 20 per cent in 1980 to 86 per cent in 20183, averting millions of deaths every year. Vaccines have the power not only to save, but also to transform lives – giving children a chance to grow up healthy, to go to school, and to improve their life prospects. Immunization contributes to productivity gains for societies and countries, contributing to improved learning outcomes and wage-earning capacity. A recent study showed that every dollar spent on immunization during the Decade of Vaccines from 2011–2020, produced an average return of up to $26 dollars across a child’s lifetime, thanks to savings on health care expenditure and lost revenues due to illness.4

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4 International Vaccine Access Center at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (2019) ROI computed using Cost of Illness (COI) method based on 10 antigens in 93 countries.
THE CHALLENGE

Despite this compelling evidence for investing in vaccination, WHO and UNICEF estimate that nearly 13 million children are not receiving any vaccines whatsoever. These children, many of whom live in remote rural areas, poor urban areas (mostly slums) and conflict-affected or insecure areas, most likely have the least access to broader health and social services beyond immunization.

While more children are getting immunized on yearly basis, the global population of children has increased resulting in the stagnation of global immunization coverage. This stagnation suggests that immunization systems continue to miss marginalized communities and populations. The current level of vaccination coverage is not enough to prevent outbreaks, as we have seen with the recent measles outbreaks around the world, affecting high-, middle- and low-income countries.

New and emerging global trends, including population growth, urbanization, climate change, conflict and displacement present important challenges that call for intensifying efforts to accelerate progress to increase immunization coverage and achieve health and immunization Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets.

ACTIVITIES

As a collaborative alliance, Gavi can channel the specific areas of expertise of its partners into a single, cohesive agenda to create long-term, predictable financing for the purchase and delivery of vaccines. This is done by pooling the resources from bilateral, philanthropic and private donors, and is a model that enhances coordination and the effectiveness of the many players in the fields of health and immunization.

As the world’s biggest vaccine procurement agency, UNICEF assists Gavi in influencing market dynamics for vaccines and related technologies to ensure a reliable supply of quality and affordable vaccines to meet countries’ needs. The World Bank provides strategic advice on capital market dynamics and plays a key role in innovative financing for Gavi. WHO offers guidance on the safety, programmatic suitability and use of new vaccines.

Countries eligible for Gavi support take the lead in determining their immunization needs, applying for funding and overseeing the implementation of their vaccination programmes. To ensure country ownership and to set countries on a course towards financial sustainability, Gavi requires country governments to contribute to the cost of vaccines.

Through their presence at national level, WHO and UNICEF country programme teams assist health ministries to strengthen and maintain immunization delivery systems and improve equity in the provision of immunization services. UNICEF focuses these efforts on technical support for improving national supply chains and logistics, social and political mobilization, vaccine financing, and the development and roll out of strategies to reach unreached populations.

UNICEF’s core activities within the Gavi partnership include:

Strengthening immunization and health systems to introduce new vaccines and to achieve sustainable equitable coverage at country level

The Gavi Secretariat relies on the country presence of both WHO and UNICEF to support national immunization programmes. UNICEF works with governments at national and subnational levels and advocates for equity enhancing immunization policies, programming and financing. It is uniquely positioned to act as bridge between traditional disease-specific programmes and an integrated and sustainable health service approach that works directly with policy makers to enhance community engagement.

Delivering life-saving vaccination programmes to the most vulnerable children

UNICEF has a long-standing comparative advantage in delivering immunization services in humanitarian contexts, during and after emergencies, and a mandate to work along the continuum of humanitarian and outbreak response, as well as to work in development programming.

Ensuring access to high-quality, affordable vaccines, immunization supplies, cold chain equipment and related services

UNICEF supplies vaccines to reach nearly half of the world’s children. UNICEF works closely with national partners, governments, suppliers and global partners including Gavi to supply quality-assured vaccines, and to ensure these vaccines are kept safe through national supply chains that ultimately reach millions of children every year.

In support of Gavi’s market-shaping priorities, UNICEF is responsible for strategic procurement aligned with the Gavi Roadmap objectives, managing procurement processes, developing and managing relationships with businesses, establishing supply arrangements and contracting modalities, delivery and monitoring of supplies, ensuring transparency on pricing information, and ensuring stable and predictable demand and supply of vaccines.

THE REPLENISHMENT

If Gavi is able to mobilize US$7.4 billion in additional investments for the 2021–2025 period, it will:

- **Vaccinate an additional 300 million children by 2025,** bringing the total number of immunized children to 1.1 billion since 2000.
- **Expand** the availability of vaccines against 18 diseases by 2025, up from just 6 in 2000.
- **Continue** fighting against outbreaks and epidemics with affordable and accessible vaccines, contributing to global health security.

Overall, full financing will allow Gavi to:

- **Reach every child in Gavi-supported countries with life-saving vaccines,** including those who are not fully protected even with the most basic vaccines, and improve access to new, improved vaccines.
- **Accelerate impact by introducing life-saving vaccines in countries that have yet to do so,** and by strengthening the systems needed to deliver routine immunization.
- **Ensure the gains and investments of the past 20 years are consolidated and sustained** so countries can increase their immunization coverage and eventually take over full financing of their immunization programmes.
- **Ensure vaccines are available to respond to and avoid further spread of epidemics.**

Gavi’s replenishment comes at a crucial moment. Accelerated action is needed to ensure every child has access to essential vaccines and health services. Immunization programmes include the necessary elements critical for effective health systems including supply of services, demand generation interventions and use of data and evidence to address equity. This contributes to the strengthening of primary health care (PHC) systems, providing a robust platform on which universal health coverage can be built and drive progress on the SDG health goals.

UNICEF will continue to play a central role in the partnership at global and country levels together with Gavi to promote healthy markets that deliver quality, affordable vaccines and associated products for children. At the same time, UNICEF will continue working closely with the Gavi secretariat in shaping a new institutional approach to supporting health care services in middle-income, and transitioning countries.

Now is the time to take a decisive action to build on the gains made so far or we risk losing the hard-won gains made over the past 20 years. UNICEF calls for:

- **Prioritization of funding** for increased investment in child health by supporting Gavi’s replenishment and increasing or maintaining official development assistance (ODA) for child health
- **Political commitment and action** by Gavi-supported governments to meet their co-financing commitments and invest in their own immunization programmes, as well as a commitment for access to all populations to national immunization programmes, including displaced populations affected by humanitarian crises.

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