

Submission The House of Commons' Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance - Examining the effects of the pandemic on children living in conflict and crisis situations or displaced areas

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare deep systemic inequities between and within societies, exacerbating grievances and conflict along the way. Progress on poverty eradication, nutrition, education and immunisation coverage have all fallen back, trillions of dollars have been lost from the global economy, and the poorest and most vulnerable communities hit hardest by the pandemic.

One third of the way to the SDG journey, the world is not on track to achieve the global Goals by 2030 with the pandemic having, in some cases, turned back decades of progress¹, the realisation of the SDG ambition of '**leave no one behind**' is truly at risk.

While children appear to be somewhat spared by the direct mortality impacts of COVID-19, the indirect effects stemming from strained health systems and disruptions to life-saving health services such as immunisation and antenatal care, can result in devastating increases in child deaths.

The pandemic is more than a global health crisis and it can only be addressed through multilateral cooperation. Global GDP is expected to fall by as much as US\$ 9.2 trillion in 2021 if countries continue to pursue an uncoordinated approach to vaccine distribution. This only weakens our collective ability to ensure equity in line with LNOB.

For over 20 years, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, has worked to give the protection of vaccines to more than 800 million children. Our target for the next 5 years is to reach children who have received no routine vaccines, the so called '**zero dose children**', 2/3rd of whom live below the poverty line and an estimated 40% living in settings affected by fragility. Vaccines work against poverty and conflict too, by giving children in particular the same life chances, when access is equitable.

There is a correlation between conflict and underperformance in immunisation. Countries supported by Gavi that are not suffering from fragility reach on average 81% of children with a third dose of vaccine, while in countries affected by conflict this drops to 65%. This is further compounded by challenges to healthcare provision in conflict and fragile settings, where access to healthcare and infrastructure are disrupted or restricted when they are needed most, further exacerbating deprivations and inequalities, and driving displacement.

In response to this, Gavi's 'Fragility, Emergencies and Refugees' policy provides greater health systems funding and flexibilities to partners and countries facing such situations. Broadly, the response to the challenge we face today builds on Gavi's work in countries affected by fragility and conflict, as well as its longstanding support for the stockpiles against diseases of epidemic potential like Ebola and Yellow Fever, funded by Gavi and managed by the International Coordination Group on vaccine provision.

During 2021-2025, Gavi aims to support countries, with the least economic resources, to vaccinate an additional **300 million children, averting up to 8 million future deaths** and bringing the **total number of children vaccinated with Gavi support to more than 1 billion**.

This same approach to equity is also embedded in the COVAX Facility and Gavi's COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC).

The COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) was launched on 4 June 2020 at the Global Vaccine Summit and was designed to respond to the barriers to access and financing faced by lower income countries, so that the whole world can win the vaccine race. The commitments made at the Summit to treat COVID-19 vaccines as a global public good, and of initial funding, created momentum for the AMC.

The COVAX AMC includes a humanitarian buffer which will enable access to COVID-19 vaccines for high-risk populations in humanitarian settings, especially where they are at risk of being excluded or where governments and health ministries have no access due to conflict. Gavi needs to be able to buy doses to be sent to humanitarian settings like refugee camps where people's promiscuity mean that COVID-19 can flare up with devastating consequences. There are 167m people on earth that are facing incredibly difficult situations, including 19m refugees and many other situations of unbearable human suffering. Being able to intervene quickly in such settings

¹ World Bank, Global Economic Prospects, January 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-economic-prospects>

is a significant step towards extinguishing a potential COVID-19 crisis wherever it flares, restoring human dignity and keeping our world safe.

The 'first resort' for covering all high-risk groups, irrespective of their legal status, is their inclusion in the country's national vaccine plans. The humanitarian buffer is but a measure of last resort. Where all other efforts have been exhausted to provide coverage as part of national plans, the humanitarian buffer will enable access to vaccines for high-risk populations in humanitarian settings.

Gavi will continue to work towards increasing coverage, adapting the vaccine portfolio to deal with new variants, and funding delivery of vaccines. Countries will also play their part mobilising resources for additional doses through the COVAX mechanism, using domestic financing and support by multilateral development banks (MDBs). This unified COVAX approach to fight COVID-19 will enable an effective response to the health and economic impact of the pandemic with aspirations of increasing coverage further.

Global leadership has demonstrated that it recognises the importance of a cooperative, multilateral approach to ending this pandemic as well as the power of vaccines to restore lives, and economies, to normal. COVID-19 needs a comprehensive global response. With the COVAX AMC, Gavi is stepping up to play a key role in that response.

With global support amounting to US\$ 6.3bn so far, the Gavi COVAX AMC is getting closer to its objective of purchasing at least 1.3 billion doses of the new vaccines against COVID-19 to cover the most vulnerable populations in 92 lower income economies in the next few months, including the humanitarian buffer².

In the coming weeks and months, the urgency is to continue to secure funding for the COVAX AMC to lock in all the doses that will provide a blanket protection to the most at risk in developing countries and in humanitarian settings. Gavi will work with the international community to bring global health security to the next level, ensuring a global response against virus mutations and further amplifying vaccine roll out. Thanks to continued global solidarity, another half a billion additional doses could be within reach in 2021, bringing the total doses available to COVAX AMC economies to 1.8 billion.

About Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is a public-private partnership that helps vaccinate half the world's children against some of the world's deadliest diseases. Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has helped to immunise a whole generation – over 822 million children – and prevented more than 14 million deaths, helping to halve child mortality in 73 lower-income countries. Gavi also plays a key role in improving global health security by supporting health systems as well as funding global stockpiles for Ebola, cholera, meningitis and yellow fever vaccines. After two decades of progress, Gavi is now focused on protecting the next generation and reaching the unvaccinated children still being left behind, employing innovative finance and the latest technology – from drones to biometrics – to save millions more lives, prevent outbreaks before they can spread and help countries on the road to self-sufficiency. Learn more at www.gavi.org and connect with us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The Vaccine Alliance brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry, technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private sector partners. View the full list of donor governments and other leading organizations that fund Gavi's work [here](#).

² 92 low- and middle-income economies eligible to get access to COVID-19 vaccines through Gavi COVAX AMC