



No child should die of an easily preventable disease. Write a letter to the editor to help make this a reality.

“Every year I hear her say, ‘If only this vaccine had been available a few years earlier — I would be celebrating my daughter’s birthday instead of mourning her death.’”
- Evelyn Kibuchi of KANCO in Kenya, sharing a friend’s story with a member of Congress

As the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge overtakes social media and the spread of Ebola dominates headlines, we’re reminded of what happens when disease outpaces science. When people are struggling with incurable diseases, it’s inexcusable to lose children to diseases that are entirely preventable. But this is the case each year, as we fail to reach millions of children with medical advances made years ago in the form of vaccines.

In the world’s poorest countries, parents sacrifice huge chunks of their income, walk for miles, and wait in line for hours for routine vaccines that we take for granted — or they simply miss out. In Kenya, for example, a country soon graduating to middle income status, over 27% of children under age one were not vaccinated in 2013.

Through Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the U.S. can help change this for Kenya, and dozens of other countries, by accelerating access to immunizations for all children. Since 2000, Gavi has worked with low-income countries, donor nations, and the private sector to bring global immunization rates to an all-time high. In January 2015, Gavi will be seeking \$7.5 billion in order to vaccinate 300 million more children by 2020, which will save over 5 million additional lives. The U.S. should do its part, contributing \$1 billion over four years.

Sample letter to the editor: U.S. Must Support Gavi¹

Instructions: **1)** Find local media contacts [here](#); **2)** Look for a story or conversation in your paper as a “hook” for your letter like: back to school, Ebola outbreak, or the ALS Challenge; **3)** Keep your letter concise and use EPIC format; **4)** Submit your letter and follow-up.

Engage	The Aug. 30 story “No treatment or vaccine for Ebola” notes that scientists have yet to develop a vaccine for this deadly disease. While the search for such a vaccine should continue, it is worth noting that every day thousands of children in the developing world die from diseases for which vaccines already exist.
Problem	Every year the world loses 6.6 million children under five, many from things as simple as pneumonia and diarrhea—both of which can be prevented with a vaccine.
Inform about the solution	Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, is helping make this tragedy a thing of the past. Gavi helps empower low-income countries to ensure vaccines reach even the poorest, most vulnerable children. Since 2000, Gavi has brought global immunization rates to an all-time high. In early 2015, Gavi will seek \$7.5 billion to immunize an additional 300 million children by 2020, savings over 5 million lives.
Call to action!	The United States must do its part to ensure that all children have access to these effective, inexpensive lifesavers we call vaccines. A pledge of \$1 billion over four years would make it clear that the United States is ready to end preventable child deaths.

10 reasons to invest in access vaccines

¹ Thank you to volunteer Greg Campbell for this sample letter, which was published in the St. Louis Dispatch

1) Kids everywhere deserve the chance to reach their full potential.

Immunization isn't just about jabs in the arm. It's about protecting children against early death and giving them the chance to thrive: to grow up healthy, go to school, and build a better world.

2) Vaccines work.

Safe, effective vaccines supported by Gavi protect against diseases that we see pop up in deadly outbreaks — yellow fever, measles, and meningitis, just to name a few — but they also prevent the leading killers of children worldwide.

3) Where you live shouldn't determine if you live.

We have effective vaccines for two of the leading causes of childhood death: pneumococcal disease (the main cause of pneumonia) and rotavirus (the leading cause of severe diarrhea), but children in low-income countries often miss out on them altogether. Gavi is the best tool for ensuring that lifesaving vaccines are available to everyone, everywhere.

4) Gavi gives a hand up – not a hand out.

All parents want to give their children a chance to grow up healthy and strong, and vaccines make that possible. When low-income countries invest in vaccines with Gavi support, they're not just saving lives; they're building **stronger, healthier, more equitable societies**.

5) The effects are long lasting.

Gavi is helping build up routine vaccination systems — **one of the best indicators of a strong health system** — and working to increase local investment in vaccine delivery. By 2020, more than twenty countries are slated to graduate off Gavi financing altogether.

6) Gavi is working smarter, not harder.

Gavi's one-of-a-kind model brings down vaccine prices by bundling up global demand to help keep costs down and assure manufacturers of future markets for their products. From just 2010 to 2013, Gavi secured a **37% reduction** in the total cost to immunize a child with pentavalent, pneumococcal, and rotavirus vaccines.

7) It's a worthy investment.

As the next budget battle in Washington looms, we should look not just at where to cut, but where to invest. And for a fraction of a fraction of the federal budget, we can give more than 5 million children the chance to survive and thrive.

8) It's a wise investment.

Vaccines are a "best buy," with a low cost and a payoff that extends far beyond an individual child. Gavi's plan to vaccinate 300 million more children will generate **\$80-100 billion in economic benefit** — through both health system savings and increased economic productivity.

9) We're in this together.

Low-income countries match a portion of the cost of each vaccine that Gavi supports, and as their economies grow, so too does their share of the cost. By 2020, the overall share financed by donors like the U.S. is expected to decrease from 80% of the total to less than 60%.

10) It's the Administration's chance to keep its promise.

President Obama has made a personal commitment to helping end preventable child deaths. A \$1 billion commitment to Gavi now not only will help save more than 5 million lives in the years ahead; it will be the down payment on ending unnecessary child death once and for all.