Our chance to show we’re serious about global health

Researchers are racing to develop an effective vaccine for Ebola, hoping to stop the outbreak’s spread, save lives, and put an end to the enormous suffering caused by this vicious infection.

But even as we scramble to find an Ebola cure, much of the world lives out of reach of lifesaving vaccines developed years ago. We lose well over a million children every year to vaccine-preventable diseases. Tackling Ebola and building a healthier future depends not just on science and medicine, but on making sure those things reach the people who need them most.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, was built to tackle this challenge. An international partnership, Gavi supports low-income countries in delivering vaccines to the poorest, most vulnerable children.

Since 2000, Gavi has brought together both endemic and donor countries with vaccine producers and civil society to increase access to vaccines, saving 6 million lives. Now Gavi is launching an ambitious plan to immunize 300 million more children by 2020, saving over 5 million more lives. Gavi will invite world leaders to pledge their support for the plan in January.

Reinforcing the investments of low-income countries, donors can help fill a $7.5 billion gap. U.S. leadership has always been central to Gavi’s success, as a founding partner and its fourth largest donor. By doing its part and committing $1 billion over four years to Gavi, the U.S. government can now help put millions more children on the path to a brighter future. The Ebola outbreak is a reminder that we must seize every chance we have to stay ahead of diseases. If we’re serious about global health, we can’t let this opportunity pass us by.

Stopping health threats before they start

Ebola is not simply a case of disease outpacing science. The virus has cost thousands of people in West Africa their lives because they happened to be born in the wrong place: one where weak health systems were no match for the deadly infection.

Gavi has already invested more than US$50 million to strengthen health systems for people in countries affected by the Ebola outbreak. If countries request it, Gavi has now agreed to reprogram current health systems grants to changing needs arising from the outbreak.

But the most important role that Gavi plays goes far beyond the current outbreak. Gavi has long been on the front lines of building healthier societies, recognizing that strong vaccination systems are the leading edge of strong health delivery systems broadly. With Gavi’s help, countries are finding innovative ways to serve hard-to-reach populations, overcoming obstacles like weak infrastructure and shortages of trained health workers. As they help get vaccines to the hardest-to-reach populations, they’re paving the way for stronger health systems.

Download Gavi’s Case for Investment.
10 reasons to invest in access to vaccines

1) *Where you live shouldn’t determine if you live.*
Of 6.3 million kids under five who die each year, **one in four** is lost to pneumonia or diarrhea. We have effective vaccines for both pneumococcal disease (which causes pneumonia) and rotavirus (the leading cause of severe diarrhea), but millions of children still miss out.

2) **Vaccines work.**
From Nicaragua to Tanzania, diarrhea wards that were overflowing with sick children a few years ago now often stand empty, thanks to the rotavirus vaccine. Hospitalizations and clinic visits for rotavirus-related diarrhea have plummetted by **50% to 90%** in many countries.iii For a few dollars each, the vaccine protects against a leading killer, allows parents to stay at work, and saves millions of dollars in treatment costs. This is just one of ten vaccines Gavi supports.
3) Kids everywhere deserve the chance to reach their full potential.
Immunization doesn’t just protect kids against early death. It opens up a lifetime of opportunity. It gives children the chance to thrive: to grow up healthy, go to school, contribute to their communities, and build a better world.

4) Gavi gives a hand up – not a hand out.
In many of the world’s poorest countries, parents will sacrifice huge chunks of their income, walk for miles, and wait in line for hours for vaccines — or simply go without. All parents want to give their children a chance to grow up healthy and strong. Gavi provides tools to make it possible.

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 unique model brings down prices by bundling up global demand, which keeps costs down and assures manufacturers of future markets for their products. From just 2010 to 2013, Gavi secured a 37% price reduction for a package of the newest childhood immunizations.

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. When low-income countries invest in vaccines with Gavi support, they’re not just saving lives; they’re building stronger, healthier, more equitable societies.

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 children will generate $80-100 billion in economic benefit through both health system savings and increased economic productivity.\[1\]

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.

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\[1\] Most facts and figures from Gavi 2016-2020 Investment Opportunity Executive Summary (2014).
\[3\] Gavi. Rotavirus Vaccine Support.