

LEARNING FROM 2020, RENEWING HOPE FOR 2021



Reflections on 2020 from Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

For Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance – a public-private partnership bringing together implementing and financing countries, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the World Bank, industry, civil society and others – this year began with an important anniversary marking 20 years of keeping people healthy since our launch at the World Economic Forum in January 2000. For us, this was an opportunity to celebrate our incredible achievements during that time, reducing vaccine-preventable child deaths by 70%, contributing to an almost 50% reduction in under-five child mortality and now protecting nearly half the world's children with life-saving vaccines. Yet, little did we know that just a few weeks later, the spread of the novel coronavirus would change the course of global health forever.

By April, the Alliance would find itself at the centre of the international response, coordinating COVAX with the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), WHO and UNICEF. Involving more than 190 economies, representing around 90% of the global population, COVAX is an unprecedented example of global solidarity. Born out of necessity, it is a global solution to a global pandemic, with the singular goal of ensuring rapid, fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for people all across the world, regardless of their ability to pay.

2020 COVAX timeline

21–24 January 2020

Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and Gavi lay the foundation for COVAX at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting

11 March 2020

World Health Organization (WHO) characterises COVID-19 as a pandemic

24 April 2020

Gavi and COVAX join the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator

4 May 2020

Coronavirus Global Response pledging event

4 June 2020

Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC) launched at Global Vaccine Summit 2020

30 October 2020

Civil society representatives appointed to key COVAX working groups

18 December 2020

COVAX welcomes its 190th participating economy

And so, just over 20 years after it was created in a small basement room of a UNICEF building in Geneva, in 2020 Gavi found itself giving birth to a new alliance, the COVAX Facility. Establishing, coordinating and administering this new effort hasn't been without its challenges, especially in terms of additional workload and pressure on Gavi Secretariat and partner staff. We've had to find new ways of working together to maintain, restore and strengthen immunisation in the context of COVID-19, and to coordinate even closer with our Alliance partners across the world – from civil society, government, multilateral institutions and the private sector – in the absence of the frequent travel upon which most global health organisations are dependent.

At the same time, this pandemic has had a palpable impact on our core work of expanding access to new and underused vaccines. In 2020, out of 68 Gavi-supported vaccine introductions and campaigns projected, 47 have been delayed or are still at risk of delay due to COVID-19 disruptions. In May 2020, analysis by Gavi, along with WHO and UNICEF, revealed that disruptions to routine immunisation services had put 80 million children under age one at risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases.

For this reason, an essential part of Gavi's work this year has been to provide vital support to countries to keep their routine immunisation services running. Despite the chaos and challenges brought on by COVID-19, we have also made significant progress in a number of areas in the fight against other vaccine-preventable diseases. In August, after four years without a case, the African Region was certified free of wild poliovirus. In November, the eleventh outbreak of Ebola virus disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was declared over; more than 40,000 people were vaccinated, with support from Gavi, over the course of the outbreak.

As the year progressed, there were promising signs of some restoring of previous immunisation coverage levels – thanks to unprecedented collaboration between Vaccine Alliance partners like WHO and UNICEF, governments, civil society and health workers. But there remains an urgent need to catch up on children missed before and during the pandemic – including the 10.6 million “zero-dose” children in Gavi-supported countries who, even before the pandemic took hold, had not yet been reached with even a single dose of basic vaccines.

All this critical work doesn't happen without funding, and it just so happened that COVID-19 struck during a replenishment year for Gavi. So amid all the tumult of the COVID-19 pandemic, in June the UK Government hosted Gavi's third donor pledging conference, the Global Vaccine Summit 2020. After the pandemic changed the original plan of hosting this in London, within just a few short weeks it was transformed into a unique virtual event that was attended by 42 heads of state, including all 7 of the G7, and viewed online by more than 180,000 people. Donors pledged more than US\$ 8.8 billion to achieve Gavi's ambitious goals of immunising a further 300 million children during our next strategic period (2021–2025), to prevent up to 8 million future deaths. And private sector partners pledged more than US\$ 70 million in contributions to strengthen Gavi programmes.

International recognition 2020

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance



Princess of Asturias Award for International Cooperation 2020



Government of the Netherlands
2020 scorecard: good (highest category)



2020 Aid Transparency Index score:
very good (highest category)



2020 report: High scorer

Gavi Secretariat



Gender EQUAL-SALARY certification:
third consecutive year