

## Write and Submit a Letter to the Editor or Oped on Gavi

*“GAVI is quite simply a great organization. It was set up by people who wanted to do aid in a different way. It doesn’t just save lives for the here and now but gives those countries and economies the ability to grow and succeed”*

*-David Cameron, Prime Minister, United Kingdom*

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 respond to Ebola, 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.

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 brought together both endemic and donor countries with vaccine producers and civil society to save 6 million lives. 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. The UK has already pledge \$1.5 billion and Canada, with an economy one-tenth that of the U.S., has pledged \$500 million.

### Sample letter to the editor or starting point for an oped on Gavi<sup>1</sup>

**Instructions:** **1)** Find local media contacts [here](#); **2)** Look for a story or conversation in your paper as a “hook” for your letter; **3)** Keep your letter concise and use EPIC format; **4)** Submit your letter or oped and follow-up.

<b><u>E</u>ngage</b>	The Ebola virus has drawn attention to Omaha. The death of the Sierra Leone physician, who had passed up lucrative opportunities to return to help his homeland, is indeed tragic (Nov. 17 World-Herald). Note: find a piece in your own paper to respond to.
<b><u>P</u>roblem</b>	While researchers are racing to develop a vaccine for Ebola, the world annually loses 6.6 million children under age 5, many from diseases preventable with existing vaccines.
<b><u>I</u>nform about the solution</b>	From 2000 through 2013, GAVI, a global vaccine alliance, has supported the immunization of 440 million children. GAVI is seeking \$7.5 billion to vaccinate 300 million more kids by 2020. A U.S. pledge of \$1 billion would encourage other donors.
<b><u>C</u>all to action!</b>	Many people don’t realize that the U.S. devotes just one-fourth of 1 percent of its federal budget to global health. Yet these crumbs strengthen the health care systems of developing countries, not to mention saving millions of lives. Urge the President to make a \$1 billion pledge to Gavi in January.

<sup>1</sup> LTE from RESULTS Volunteer Donna Schindler Munro of Bremerton, WA appearing in *Omaha World-Herald*

## Tips for media this month

1) Scientists are working to fast track an Ebola vaccine, and Gavi just committed \$300 million to make sure it gets to the people who need it most. In the meantime, we still need to get the vaccines we already have to millions of kids. Congress just approved \$5.4 billion in emergency spending for Ebola: certainly we can find \$1 billion over 4 years to save millions.

2) Holidays. The holidays are about children and families. Let's keep the children healthy and ward off family crises by making sure all children receiving the gift of life-saving vaccinations.

## Reasons to invest in access to vaccines

### *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. 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.

### *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 plummeted by **50% to 90%** in many countries. 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) Gavi works.*

There is often cynicism about government-funded programs, but Gavi works. Gavi has brought together governments, businesses, foundations, and civil society to be responsive to the needs of poor nations around vaccines. Gavi also helps strengthen healthcare systems, reduced vaccines costs, and is investing over \$300 million to help West African nations address Ebola.

### *4) It's a worthy and a wise investment.*

The U.S. can support Gavi's plan to vaccinate 300 million children and save over 5 million lives. Gavi's plan will generate **\$80-100 billion in economic benefit** — through both health system savings and increased economic productivity. Low-income countries also 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%.

### *6) 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.

### *7) 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.