

It is time to give every child the chance at a healthy future

The G20's partnership with Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

By Maree Nutt and Dr Joanne Carter

The battle against Ebola reminds us that medical advances do little good if they fail to reach the people who need them most. As we fight this terrible outbreak, the global community must also lay the foundation for a future in which where you are born doesn't determine how long you live.

We can start with the basics. Pneumonia and diarrhoea claim one out of every four children who die today. If they were lucky enough to have been born in a place where a vaccine was available, many of them could have been saved.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, is working to ensure that countries have the capacity to deliver lifesaving vaccines so that every child, everywhere, has the same chance at a healthy future. Since 2000, Gavi has united donor and endemic countries, vaccine manufacturers and civil society, private foundations and technical experts to transform vaccine delivery in the world's poorest countries.

Thanks in no small part to G20 leadership, Gavi has helped countries immunise nearly half a billion children, saving more than six million lives.

The G20's contributions to Gavi's mission are as essential as they are diverse. Led by the United Kingdom, G20 members provide over half of Gavi's donor financing. As a leader in innovative finance, Gavi has raised funding through vaccine bonds backed by long-term pledges from donors like South Africa. India and Indonesia are providing co-financing alongside Gavi investments to expand their vaccination coverage.

Gavi purchases vaccines manufactured in eight different G20 countries, including Brazil, India and Indonesia. This growing diversity of vaccine suppliers has contributed to the 37 per cent drop in cost since



GAVI/KAREL PRINSLOO

2010 of a package of the newest childhood vaccines, including immunisation against leading causes of pneumonia and diarrhoea.

G20 leadership extends to vaccine research and development as well. Host Australia can be proud of its commitment to medical research and the development of a lifesaving vaccine against rotavirus diarrhoea and the HPV vaccine against cervical cancer.

As it helps vaccinate individual children, Gavi is also helping countries and communities build up routine vaccination systems – a leading edge in the delivery of health services more broadly. Unfortunately, one in five children globally still misses out on even the most basic vaccines.

G20 leadership is now more important than ever, as Gavi works to fund, and then implement, its ambitious plan to immunise 300 million more children by 2020. At a conference hosted by Germany in January, Gavi will invite donors to pledge their support. Bold financial pledges from G20 countries – including Australia and the United States – are needed to help fill a \$7.5 billion funding gap. That investment will save more than five million lives, strengthen health systems in some

of the world's poorest countries and produce between \$80 billion and \$100 billion in economic benefit.

With a successful Gavi pledging conference, we will see the return on our investment measured in healthier children, healthier communities, and a healthier world.

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2. **Engaging in cross-sectoral collaboration**
MDG acceleration requires a combination of actions to be taken within sectors and across sectors. Often there can be significant impact from initiatives implemented outside the immediate relevant sector, but the incentives for pursuing them may be weak or nonexistent. To overcome that, the engagement of a cross-cutting ministry or set of ministries is needed, supported by the commitment of the most senior political leadership.

In some countries, UN Resident Coordinators and World Bank Country Directors have engaged in joint planning, programme design and advocacy to support countries to accelerate MDG progress – exemplifying the kind of partnership that will continue to be important for implementing the SDGs.

3. **Finding ‘multipliers’ and realising the gains**

As all the MDGs are interrelated, making progress on one has positive effects on others. The multiplier effects can be large, for example when investments are made in opportunities for women and girls, or in modern energy.

4. **Adapting innovative acceleration solutions across countries**

Many countries face similar bottlenecks to making progress on a given MDG. For example, difficulty in reaching a well-equipped health centre in time for childbirth can be fatal. Each country finds solutions appropriate to its own context. Ghana addressed this through a reimbursable voucher programme that paid bus and truck drivers for transporting pregnant women to birthing services. Ethiopia set up maternal waiting homes near birthing centres.

There are cases where solutions can be easily adapted to work in different country settings. An open-source system used to track the demand for family planning commodities and manage distribution in one country, for example, can be adapted and employed

A girl with injuries sustained during childbirth rests in a hospital in South Sudan. Improving maternal health, one of the MDGs, can be facilitated through information-sharing between countries

across countries and for different types of commodities. The sharing and adaptation of major poverty-reducing initiatives, such as cash transfers or employment guarantee programmes, beyond their countries of origin have benefited millions across the world.

5. **Minimising shocks and building capacity to cope**

Short-term shocks to households, such as income or job losses or illness, can lead to long-term setbacks in human development. Measures for social protection need to be adapted to country circumstances, and there are many examples of successful schemes. Through its Social Protection Floor Initiative, the UN provides advice on what might work. Shocks can also stem from economic or financial crises, increases in the prices of fuel or food, major disease outbreaks, adverse weather events or prolonged conflicts, requiring society-wide resilience to be built.

Opportunities for G20 leaders

At the Brisbane Summit, G20 leaders can express their willingness and determination to accelerate progress on the MDGs in 2015. To this end, there are several things the leaders can do.

They can share knowledge about what works so that other countries could adapt in their own quest for progress. G20 members have moved the global figures for MDG progress through their successes in their own countries. These experiences are insightful for other countries and can inform new policies and programmes.

They can agree on measures for a strong, stable and diversified global economy. The growth goal to lift,

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by 2018, the G20’s collective gross domestic product by two per cent more than what was projected in 2013 is expected to be a major deliverable at the Brisbane Summit. It offers the promise of more robust growth and accelerated human development. It is important that growth is inclusive, expands opportunities for decent work and livelihoods, and generates revenues to invest back into sustainable and human development.

They can support the adoption of a focused and implementable global development agenda. The MDGs were a major step towards eradicating poverty in all its dimensions. That journey will continue after 2015. It will help enormously if G20 leaders can link and align their multi-year action plan for growth with the future global sustainable development agenda. ■