



# the case for Canada's leadership in global immunization

Canada is a recognized global leader on child survival. Thanks to decades of investments in proven high-impact initiatives and smart policy leadership, Canada has played a pivotal role in fueling a global revolution in child survival that has contributed to cutting under-five child deaths in half since 1990. A key ingredient of that success has been immunization programs – both routine and cutting-edge – which have been delivered in collaboration with communities and country partners around the world.

Immunization programs that prioritize vaccinating every child, everywhere save lives and reduce suffering. They often serve as one of the first points of contact between families and the health systems that will support them throughout their lives. The systems required to support vaccines – from supply-chains, to cold-chains, to the front-line health-workers who are driving delivery – both strengthen and force health systems to be stronger.

This year, Canada has an opportunity to build on its legacy of leadership on vaccines in two ways:

1. Support the global drive to eradicate polio by pledging CAD \$215 million over 4 years to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI);
2. Keep Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, strong – by committing CAD \$600 million over 5 years to ensure Gavi meets its goal of saving 8 million more lives.

## Gender and immunizations:

Gender barriers are still unfortunately an important factor in who receives the vaccines. Common gender barriers are:

- Division of labour in the household may place greater burdens for vaccination on female caregivers.
- Low status of caregivers or lack of women's access to household funds may limit the means to afford the costs of vaccination.
- Religious practices or cultural values may prevent female caregivers from seeking immunization services from male health workers.
- Travelling long distances to health clinics may deter women from vaccinating their children.
- Long wait times at clinics and immunization sites only being open during working hours may conflict with caregivers who work during the day.

In order to combat these types of barriers, both Gavi and GPEI have launched gender strategies. If you would like to read more check out this article about [Gavi's collaboration with Girl Effect](#).

## why vaccines matter

Vaccines are undeniably one of humanity's most impactful health inventions. Since 2000 alone we have successfully reduced deaths by vaccine-preventable diseases by 70%, saving millions of lives. For every US\$1 of investment in immunization we see benefits of US\$54.<sup>1</sup> This is because vaccinated children are healthier, more educated and contribute to growing a country's economy.

Despite the massive progress that has been made, most of the global vaccination goals set ten years ago will not be achieved. Over 19 million children still remain unvaccinated, which translates into 1.5 million dying each year due to vaccine-preventable diseases.<sup>2</sup>

The next decade presents real opportunities for impact through immunization. The launch of the **Global Action Plan on SDG 3** in 2019, as well as the launch of the **Immunization Agenda 2030** in 2020 will provide frameworks for progress in health and immunization.



## Canada's legacy of leadership

The Government of Canada has long been a leader in the fight against vaccine-preventable diseases both by being a critical player in the research and development of vaccines and by funding initiatives such as Gavi and GPEI. From the former Conservative Government's ground-breaking 2010 Muskoka Initiative focusing on maternal, newborn and child health to the current Liberal Government's Feminist International Assistance Policy and commitment to gender equality, Canada's leadership has been instrumental in improving vaccine coverage around the world.

## Canada's key achievements

- Founding donor of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative – cutting polio cases from 350,000 in 1988 to just 33 in 2018.<sup>3</sup>
- Leading donor of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance – which has immunized 760 million people globally.<sup>4</sup>
- Early investor in the Advance Market Commitment for Pneumococcal Vaccine - which reduced the price of the vaccine to low-income countries, saving more lives at lower costs.
- Pioneer investor in INFUSE – an innovation accelerator that finds new pathways to deliver vaccines to the hardest to reach.
- Vaccine developers – researchers at National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg were critical to the development of the Ebola vaccine that has been rolled out through Gavi.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Johns Hopkins University – International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC), 2019. Methodology Report: Decade of Vaccines Economics (DOVE) Return on Investment Analysis.

<sup>2</sup> WHO immunization fact sheet, 18 July 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/facts-in-pictures/detail/immunization>

<sup>3</sup> Global Polio Eradication Initiative. Investment Case. <http://polioeradication.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Polio-InvestmentCase-Report-20190819.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Gavi. *Gavi Investment Opportunity*. <https://www.gavi.org/sites/default/files/publications/2021-2025-Gavi-Investment-Opportunity.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Helen Branswell. 'Against all odds': The inside story of how scientists across three continents produced an Ebola vaccine. STAT. <https://www.statnews.com/2020/01/07/inside-story-scientists-produced-world-first-ebola-vaccine/>

## why invest in GPEI?

GPEI was founded in 1988 in an effort to eradicate polio from the world. Polio is an infectious disease caused by the poliovirus that can lead to muscle weakness and result in paralysis and sometimes death. It is also a disease that predominately affects children under the age of 5. During the 19th and 20th century, polio was one of the most worrying childhood diseases in Europe and North America, until the discovery of the first vaccine. Since there is no known cure for polio, mass vaccinations are the only way to stop the spread of the disease.

Thanks to coordinated global efforts, the world has made significant progress in ensuring every child has access to these life-saving vaccines. GPEI works through its partners to develop more effective vaccines, deliver them to the communities, and to educate people on the need to be immunized. As a result the number of cases has dropped from over 350,000 in 1988 to only 33 cases in 2018. However, until the disease is eradicated it is always possible for the disease to re-emerge.

If we want to make history and see this devastating disease completely eradicated, then Canada must maintain its leadership and level of investment. This means Canada should commit CAD \$215 million over 4 years to the GPEI. This money is critical to ensuring that GPEI has the financing needed to both fully eradicate the disease and transition to a polio-free world.

## why invest in Gavi?

Since 2000, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance has driven massive progress in global health by saving millions of lives through vaccines. Currently, Gavi operates as a partnership of public and private institutions and focuses on delivering 18 vaccines in eligible countries – helping to vaccinate almost half the world's children. The delivery of these vaccines can save lives, such as the vaccine that protects against the human papillomavirus (HPV), a disease that causes 70% of all cervical cancer cases making this the world's first cancer preventing vaccine.<sup>6</sup>

In 2021, Gavi will begin a new five-year strategic cycle to build on the gains made to date. However, we still see many children missing out on the benefits of vaccines and the strides we've made could be threatened by increasing fragility, displacement, and recurrent disease outbreaks. This is compounded by the fact that each year the number of births in Gavi-supported countries increase, meaning that we need to vaccinate more children just to maintain the same level of coverage.

In order to deliver on the plans set out for 2021-2025, Gavi is seeking at least USD \$7.4 billion from all donors. It is critical that the Government of Canada makes a pledge of CAD \$600 million over 4 years to maintain its 5.2% share of the overall investment required. This sustained and long-term commitment is necessary to ensure predictability and stability in Gavi's programs and funding.

### A fully funded Gavi will:

- Vaccinate another 300 million children, helping save 7 to 8 million lives.
- Deliver over 3.2 billion doses of vaccines to 55 eligible countries.
- Protect the world against polio re-emergence through routine immunizations across Gavi countries in collaboration with GPEI.
- Successfully transition 10 countries into self-financing for vaccines.
- Catalyze USD \$3.6 billion in domestic co-financing.
- Facilitate 1.4 billion touchpoints between families and health services through vaccination.
- Create \$80-100 billion in economic benefits.

<sup>6</sup> WHO. *Human papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer*. January, 2019. [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-papillomavirus-\(hpv\)-and-cervical-cancer](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/human-papillomavirus-(hpv)-and-cervical-cancer)

## how they work together

Investments in both GPEI and Gavi are important because of the collaboration between the two organizations. As the number of cases of polio around the world decreases and the road to eradication gets shorter, there are new questions about what a transition to a polio-free world would look like. Questions such as: how will health systems that have been supported by GPEI funding continue to maintain their capacity if that funding is cut off and who will be responsible for maintaining stockpiles of polio vaccines should the disease resurface?

Since 2013, Gavi has included routine polio immunizations as part of their vaccine package and in 2018 Gavi became a full member of GPEI. Gavi has also benefited tremendously from the expertise developed by GPEI since 1988 to support and strengthen broader immunization activities and is now committed to supporting routine immunizations in all markets that GPEI currently operates in. It is this type of collaboration that will ensure the transition to a polio-free world is smooth and that the health systems that are currently being supported by GPEI will continue to deliver routine immunizations to those who need them.

## the time for action is now

Investments in vaccines require urgent action now. With both GPEI and Gavi up for replenishment and only ten years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Canada has the opportunity to build on its legacy by continuing to support immunization programs. To do this, the Government of Canada needs to make an ambitious commitment to both GPEI and Gavi.

For the most up-to-date information on our [#VaccinesWork](#) campaign and strategic ways you can [take action](#) for a healthier world, visit [www.resultscanada.ca](http://www.resultscanada.ca).

### Climate change and vaccines

Over the next few decades as we deal with the direct impacts of climate change, immunization programs will become increasingly important for two main reasons:

1. The number of prevalence of vaccine-preventable diseases will likely rise as warmer climates increase transmission between people and worsening air conditions might increase rates of pneumonia and other diseases.
2. As more people are displaced as climate refugees they will lose access to health services and will be more vulnerable to diseases.

To learn more about the connection between climate and immunizations please click [here](#).

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905-280 Albert St.  
Ottawa, ON | K1P 5G8  
613.562.9240 | 1.855.807.8485  
[resultscanada.ca](http://resultscanada.ca)