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## **GAVI Alliance Announces Funding for New Vaccines Against Two Major Killers of Children in Poorest Nations**

***First Investment of US\$ 200 Million for New-Generation Vaccines against  
Rotavirus, Pneumococcal Disease  
Offers Promise for Children in Developing World***

Geneva, Switzerland; Berlin, Germany, 29 November, 2006. The GAVI Alliance announced today it will support the introduction of vaccines against two diseases that kill an estimated 1.5 million children every year in the world's poorest regions, opening a new era in efforts to cut the time it takes to deliver safe and effective new vaccines to poor nations.

A first investment of about US\$ 200 million has been approved by the GAVI Alliance Board of Directors to help an initial group of countries introduce newly-licensed vaccines against rotavirus, which causes diarrheal disease and 500,000 deaths among children, and pneumococcus, a major cause of pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis (blood poisoning.) Both diseases affect children on every continent, but are particularly deadly in developing nations. GAVI's investments will increase over time as more experience is gained and an increasing number of countries adopt the vaccine.





“Our goal now is to move quickly to save the lives of as many children as possible with the vaccines we have in hand,” said GAVI Executive Secretary Julian Lob-Levyt. “Working with UNICEF and WHO, we will focus first on countries where the vaccines have shown efficacy. As new and more effective vaccines come on the market, and as political support grows for introducing them in other GAVI countries, we will scale up to meet demand”.

The GAVI Alliance Board’s decision builds on the work of GAVI and its partners, which has helped to significantly boost immunisation rates in the poorest nations. Over the next 10 years, GAVI will demonstrate its ability to speed up introduction of the newest vaccines available in industrialised nations to the health programmes of the poorest countries, where the new technologies are most needed. GAVI is committing funds to help a number of eligible countries purchase approved vaccines against the two diseases that are amongst the biggest preventable causes of death among children in poor nations, according to the WHO.

The new vaccines will be introduced on a staggered scale— the rotavirus vaccine in 13 countries in Latin America and Eastern Europe and the pneumococcal vaccine in up to 10 GAVI eligible countries over the next few years in Africa and South Asia. Surveillance and monitoring systems are also being introduced. This progressive introduction will ensure the time needed to complete on-going and additional efficacy studies.

The new vaccines and those currently in the development pipeline are expected to save millions of lives over time. The vaccines also have the potential for relieving the significant economic burden of disease, an impact that researchers are beginning to document (“The Value of Vaccination”, David E. Bloom & David Canning; World Economics, October 31, 2005). Two rotavirus vaccines, one made by GSK and the other by Merck, have been approved for use by US and European health authorities. These vaccines have been found to work well in Europe and Latin America, while trials in Asia and Africa are on-going. The currently licensed pneumococcal vaccine Prevenar, which is produced by Wyeth, has been proven effective in a range of countries. All three vaccines are expected to be pre-qualified by WHO before the end of 2007, a pre-requisite for GAVI funding of vaccine purchases, and are



expected to reach children in the developing world by spring of 2008. Following closely behind, one more pneumococcal vaccine produced by GSK is also expected to be available. “GAVI and its partners are laying the groundwork for the introduction of next generation of vaccines, while building political support for their introduction,” said Michel Zaffran, GAVI Deputy Executive Secretary.

Health officials in Ukraine greeted GAVI’s decision with enthusiasm. “The GAVI’s decision to fund rotavirus and pneumococcal vaccines will help us to protect Ukrainian children and give them new life,” said Lyudmila Mukharskaya, deputy chief sanitary doctor for the Ministry of Health.

### **Pneumococcal Disease**

Support from the GAVI Alliance will make it possible to introduce the currently licensed pneumococcal vaccine into a set of GAVI-supported countries to prevent pneumococcal disease. This “first-step”, covering the years 2007-2010 will serve as a springboard for the years 2011 to 2015, when the next generation of new pneumococcal vaccines will come on the market.

The “pipeline” for pneumococcal vaccines is particularly strong, according to PneumoADIP Director Orin Levine, and is expected to produce next generation vaccines that are more closely aligned with the strains of pneumococcus that cause the most damage in developing countries. Nonetheless, the burden of pneumococcal disease is so great in many countries in Africa and Asia, that the current vaccine would have a significant impact. By 2010, a pneumococcal vaccine is expected to prevent an estimated 47,000 deaths in the countries where it will be introduced by GAVI; from 2011 to 2015, estimates are that the vaccine will save an additional 400,000 lives.

“The GAVI Alliance decision to finance pneumococcal vaccines is a major step forward in combating the world’s leading vaccine preventable cause of child deaths. This decision will bring new, life-saving vaccines to the developing world faster than ever before. This



investment in child health will save the lives of nearly 4 million children by 2025,” said Orin Levine, Executive Director of GAVI’s PneumoADIP.

### **Rotavirus Disease**

GAVI support will make it possible for as many as 13 low-income countries in Eastern Europe and in Central and South America to begin introducing the vaccines two years after their approval for markets in the United States and the European Union. Traditionally it has taken 15 to 20 years for vaccines to make their way from industrialised nations to the poorest regions of the world. This investment will set in motion the potential to prevent 370,000 childhood deaths in the world’s poorest countries by 2015, as well as prevent over 14 million hospitalisations and clinic visits, and save more than US\$71 million in direct medical costs. “Developing countries can now realise the rewards of GAVI’s commitment to address the disparity of access to new vaccines in different parts of the world,” said Dr. John R. Wecker, director of RVP. “Today’s pledge of support by GAVI demonstrates that the global community is moving quickly to save the lives of millions of children in the world’s poorest countries.”

While rates of rotavirus infection are nearly the same around the world, almost 90% of the childhood deaths from rotavirus occur in the developing world. Because access to appropriate medical care for severe diarrhea and dehydration is limited in developing countries, the most effective strategy to reduce the incidence and severity of the disease is prevention through vaccination.

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### **The GAVI Alliance**

*An alliance of all the major stakeholders in immunisation, the GAVI Alliance includes among its partners developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry in both industrialised and developing countries, research and technical agencies, NGOs, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It is estimated that more than 1.7 million early deaths will have been prevented as a result of support by GAVI up to the end of 2005.*





*GAVI's efforts are critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goal on child health, which calls for reducing childhood mortality by two-thirds by 2015. Of the more than 10 million children who die before reaching their fifth birthday every year, 2.5 million die from diseases that could be prevented with currently available or new vaccines.*

### **PATH's Rotavirus Vaccine Program**

*PATH is an international, nonprofit organisation that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions that enable communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health. By collaborating with diverse public- and private-sector partners, PATH helps provide appropriate health technologies and vital strategies that change the way people think and act.*

*The PATH Rotavirus Vaccine Program (RVP), a partnership with the World Health Organization and the US Centers for Disease Control, was established in 2003 as an Accelerated Development and Introduction Plan (ADIP) funded by the GAVI Alliance. GAVI ADIPs are a unique approach to dramatically reducing the typical 10-15 year timeline between introduction of new vaccines in wealthy countries and their availability in the developing world.*

### **PneumoADIP:**

*The goal of the Pneumococcal Vaccines Accelerated Development and Introduction Plan (PneumoADIP) is to shorten the time between the use of a new vaccine in industrialized countries and its introduction in developing countries by reducing demand uncertainty and achieving an affordable, sustainable supply of vaccines. This novel approach is funded by the GAVI Alliance through its partner the GAVI Fund. PneumoADIP is located at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. The mission of PneumoADIP is to improve child survival and health by accelerating the evaluation of and access to new life saving pneumococcal vaccines for the world's children. For more information, please visit: [www.preventpneumo.org](http://www.preventpneumo.org).*

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