

## 3.4 million deaths averted through GAVI-funded immunization programs

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3.4 million deaths will be averted in the world's poorest countries through immunisation funded by the GAVI Alliance between 2000 and 2008, according to new data released by the World Health Organization (WHO).

WHO monitors the projected impact of GAVI programmes in 76 developing countries. The new projections show an increase of 600,000 deaths averted compared to the period 2000-2007. The data will be presented to the GAVI Alliance Board on Wednesday in Geneva.

"Our front-loaded effort at scaling up immunisation programmes works well, preventing millions of premature deaths and much debilitating illness, as well as ensuring immunisation's place as a global health priority as we drive towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)," said Dr Julian Lob-Levyt, Executive Secretary of the GAVI Alliance.

WHO also projects that, by the end of 2008, a cumulative 213 million children will have been reached with GAVI-supported vaccines.

The cumulative number of children benefitting from three doses of Hib vaccine (*Haemophilus influenzae* type B) is projected to rise to 41.7 million by the end of 2008, up from an estimated 28.2 million just 12 months earlier. The Hib bacterium can cause severe infections such as meningitis and pneumonia.

DTP3 coverage and yellow fever vaccine are also showing continued increases. DTP3 (three doses of diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis) is the accepted indicator of basic immunisation coverage in developing countries.

Hepatitis B vaccine – GAVI's single biggest success story in terms of future deaths averted – is projected to have reached a cumulative 192.2 million children by end 2008, up from an estimated 155.7 million at the end of 2007.

"As financial markets tumble, these numbers show the positive results of investment in human lives," Julian Lob-Levyt said. "Donors and donor governments can take this as encouragement to continue funding health interventions driven by the developing countries themselves. Only through long term predictable funding can we guarantee that poor countries are able to improve their immunisation programmes in order to save lives."

Of the 9.2 million children who die before reaching their fifth birthday every year, close to one quarter die from diseases that could be prevented with currently available or new vaccines.

On Thursday, the GAVI Alliance Board will discuss a New Vaccine Investment Strategy that will offer poor countries more vaccines to alleviate their disease burden. This will have direct implications for GAVI's funding needs.

Source: Gavi Alliance

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