

Cost of child vaccines fall, more kids saved

November 20 2009

(AP) -- Babies squirmed and wailed as needles plunged into their chubby thighs at a public health clinic on the outskirts of Hanoi on Friday. Like little ones everywhere, the reaction to the sting was never pretty.

Starting next year an extra 6.3 million children worldwide will have the chance to feel that pinch and get vaccinated against some of the world's deadliest illnesses, according to the GAVI Alliance, a global [vaccine](#) partnership that helped organize the Hanoi event.

The funding will come from a drop in the price of the one-shot vaccine that safeguards against five [infectious diseases](#) to below \$3 a dose, nearly 50 cents cheaper than this year, the alliance said.

It has been able to negotiate cheaper vaccine prices through competition created by rising demand for the shots. About half of the vaccines purchased by the alliance were produced in developing countries such as India.

"We know that immunization will start children having healthy lives," former Irish President Mary Robinson, board chair of the alliance, said as she watched the babies being immunized in Hanoi's Tan Hong Commune Health Center. "We also know that, unfortunately, in the world there are ... children who don't get any vaccines so they die early. It is tragic because we can prevent it."

As a result of not receiving routine vaccinations, about 2 million children die annually.

The pentavalent vaccine protects against [diphtheria](#), tetanus, pertussis, pneumonia, hepatitis B and Hib, which causes meningitis and [pneumonia](#)

The GAVI Alliance, with partners ranging from U.N. agencies to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has vaccinated about 256 million poor [children](#) since 2000.

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Citation: Cost of child vaccines fall, more kids saved (2009, November 20) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-11-child-vaccines-fall-kids.html>

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