

Gates makes \$10 billion vaccines pledge

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Writer



Microsoft founder Bill Gates looks on during a panel discussion on "Meeting the Millennium Development Goals", at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Friday, Jan. 29, 2010. (AP Photo/Michel Euler)

(AP) -- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will donate \$10 billion over the next decade to research new vaccines and bring them to the world's poorest countries, the Microsoft co-founder and his wife said Friday.

Calling upon governments and business to also contribute, they said the money will produce higher immunization rates and aims to make sure that 90 percent of children are immunized against dangerous diseases such as diarrhea and pneumonia in poorer nations.

"We must make this the decade of vaccines," [Bill Gates](#) said in a

statement. "Vaccines already save and improve millions of lives in developing countries. Innovation will make it possible to save more children than ever before."

Gates said the commitment more than doubles the \$4.5 billion the foundation has given to vaccine research over the years.

The foundation said up to 7.6 million children under 5 could be saved through 2019 as a result of the donation. It also estimates that an additional 1.1 million kids would be saved if a [malaria vaccine](#) can be introduced by 2014. A [tuberculosis vaccine](#) would prevent even more deaths.

"Vaccines are a miracle," said Melinda Gates. "With just a few doses, they can prevent deadly diseases for a lifetime."

Margaret Chan, head of the [World Health Organization](#), called the Gates contribution unprecedented and urged governments and private donors to add to the initiative.

"An additional two million deaths in children under five years could be prevented by 2015 through widespread use of new vaccines and a 10 percent increase in global vaccination coverage," said Chan.

The Gates statement said the foundation would help to dramatically reduce [child mortality](#) in the next 10 years and urged others to pitch in with research funding and other financial support for poor children.

Gates noted the announcement comes on the 10th anniversary of the foundation's partner GAVI Alliance, which he praised for its work in immunizing children against killer diseases.

"This is an amazing announcement," GAVI CEO Julian Lob-Leyt said.

Bill and Melinda Gates did not specify how the money would be distributed, and a spokeswoman said that had yet to be decided.

A spokesman for GAVI said the alliance was involved mostly on the distribution end and therefore would receive only part of the money.

Vaccines are usually an effective way to spend money to improve public health, because they can even be delivered in poor countries lacking functioning health systems.

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