

Pacific Friends of Global Health welcomes Australian Government's Gavi commitment

Melbourne, 4 June, 2020: Australia's leading advocacy group for global health in the Pacific, has welcomed the Australian Government's renewed commitment to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to ensure routine vaccinations can continue to be delivered and accessed despite COVID-19.

Tonight in London, the [Global Vaccine Summit](#), hosted by the UK Government will see donors pledge their support to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to sustain and accelerate their lifesaving work in some of the most vulnerable countries. World leaders will pledge to support the mass vaccination campaigns and rebuilding of health systems needed over the coming years to help address the damage done by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Senator Marise Payne and Minister for International Development and the Pacific, the Hon. Alex Hawke, committed renewed funding of \$300 million. Prime Minister Scott Morrison will announce Australia's contribution to this global effort at the Global Vaccine Summit 2020 tonight.

With COVID-19 now reported in almost all Gavi-eligible countries, the Vaccine Alliance is [providing immediate funding](#) to health systems, enabling countries to protect health care workers, perform vital surveillance and training, and purchase diagnostic tests.

Pacific Friends of Global Health Chair and CEO of the Burnet Institute, Professor Brendan Crabb AC, has congratulated the Australian Government for its continued commitment to the Pacific region.

"COVID-19 is disrupting life-saving immunisation services around the world, putting millions of children – particularly in our vulnerable Pacific regions – at risk of diseases like diphtheria, measles and polio," said Professor Crabb.

"Children in our region such as in Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, the Solomon Islands and Kiribati are now protected against more vaccine-preventable diseases than at any point in history. Due to COVID-19, this immense progress is now under threat, risking the resurgence of diseases like measles and polio. Not only will maintaining immunisation programmes prevent more outbreaks, it will also ensure the infrastructure needed to roll out an eventual COVID-19 vaccine on a global scale.

"This has health security implications for Australia, with the potential regression of decades of work in immunising against preventable diseases. COVID-19 is a stark reminder of the importance of resilient health systems and critical importance of vaccines.

"A flow on effect of vaccines saving the lives of millions of young children each year, is improved sustainability and economic development. With confidence that their children will

survive, parents decide to have much smaller families and, as a result, have far better opportunities at income generation. As a result, global population growth and extreme poverty are reducing. Support for GAVI is a key to maintaining this positive momentum."

Since March 2020, routine childhood immunisation services have been disrupted on a global scale. More than half (53%) of the 129 countries where data were available reported moderate-to-severe disruptions, or a total suspension of vaccination services during March-April 2020.

The reasons for disrupted services vary. Some parents are reluctant to leave home because of restrictions on movement, lack of information or because they fear infection with the COVID-19 virus. And many health workers are unavailable because of restrictions on travel, or redeployment to COVID response duties, as well as a lack of protective equipment.

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About Pacific Friends of Global Health

Pacific Friends of Global Health ("Pacific Friends") serves three of the world's most significant global health organisations; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria ("the Global Fund"), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance ("Gavi") and UNITAID. We promote a greater understanding of the three organisations and aim to mobilise political and financial support in the Pacific region. Our mission is to increase the profile of the three organisations, increase understanding of their distinct and complementary roles in the global health response, showcase synergies between the organisations, raise awareness of the global health issues in the context of the Pacific region and engage with key leaders and decision makers in the government, the media, private sector, academia, civil society organisations, including communities and foundations, in Australia and in due course, in New Zealand.

About Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is a public-private partnership that helps vaccinate half the world's children against some of the world's deadliest diseases. Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has helped to immunise a whole generation – over 760 million children – and prevented more than 13 million deaths, helping to halve child mortality in 73 developing countries. Gavi also plays a key role in improving global health security by supporting health systems as well as funding global stockpiles for Ebola, cholera, meningitis and yellow fever vaccines. After two decades of progress, Gavi is now focused on protecting the next generation and reaching the unvaccinated children still being left behind, employing innovative finance and the latest technology – from drones to biometrics – to save millions more lives, prevent outbreaks before they can spread and help countries on the road to self-sufficiency. Learn more at www.gavi.org and connect with us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



The Vaccine Alliance brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry, technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private sector partners. View the full list of donor governments and other leading organizations that fund Gavi's work [here](#).