
Report of the Chief Executive Officer

29 November 2023

Dear Board Members

As we approach our December Board meeting in Ghana, I want to take the opportunity to share my personal reflections on the past year and set the scene for our coming discussions.

But first some minor housekeeping. For this first report to the Board as interim CEO, I want to depart slightly from the previous format. Cognisant of the many demands on your time, it is my hope that you will find this short narrative report and the accompanying presentation (PDF) an easily digestible guide for our discussions, without recapitulating or pre-empting the detailed briefings and deliberations that lie ahead.

I remain humbled by the trust that you all placed in me. And I am equally confident that our core priorities – delivering on Gavi 5.1 and the Operational Excellence enablers; developing an ambitious Gavi 6.0 strategy; and preparing for a successful replenishment – are broadly on track and the most prudent focus of our collective endeavours in the evolving global context.

Gavi's resilience in the face of uncertainty

Our Board meeting will take place against a backdrop of high global and regional geopolitical tensions, turbulence in the global economy, and a host of interacting risk factors and vulnerabilities that have the potential to materially affect immunisation coverage and the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases in many Gavi-supported countries.

The past year has seen the continued re-emergence of vaccine-preventable diseases such as cholera and measles in areas where they had previously been well controlled, while the total number of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases also continued on an upward trend. The underlying, and often interrelated, drivers of this trend include conflict and insecurity, health system fragility, gaps in routine immunisation coverage, climate disorder, urbanisation and displacement.

At the same time, many Gavi-supported countries and our donors are feeling the effects of global economic uncertainty and growing disquiet over geopolitical conflict, which may have unpredictable knock-on effects for domestic political economies.

Our Alliance is more than 22 years old. In that time, it has weathered global storms from the financial crash to the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to vaccinate more than

1 billion children in the process and averting more than 17 million future deaths. But complacency is a luxury we can never afford to indulge in.

The confluence of risks facing the world in 2023 and beyond have given added impetus to our efforts to deliver on our core priorities, and in so doing ensure that Gavi has the agility to rapidly respond to the needs of the countries we support; seize opportunities for impact as and when they present themselves; and remain efficient, resilient and sustainable in the face of an uncertain operational and fiscal landscape. Together, we have taken the most important steps on this journey, and through our focus on strengthening the operational enablers that underpin Gavi's support for countries, we are making progress towards our must-wins.

Leadership and culture change in an evolving landscape for global health

By necessity and design, our efforts to strengthen Gavi for the future began in July when we formally announced our aspirational Operational Excellence (OE) operating expenses and workforce goals, followed in August by the first phase of recalibration and realignment of our leadership team and processes. Over the past four months, we have started to build a unified, integrated and empowered leadership team, with a simplified structure and ways of working: One Gavi. These are the first and most important steps on our culture change journey to ensure that we can plan and prioritise effectively; react, adapt and respond with speed and agility when required; execute against our strategic priorities with alacrity; and strengthen Gavi's key partnerships and collaborations within an evolving global health architecture.

Our revitalised leadership team has enabled us to progress on other priority areas to make Gavi's work more effective, focused, plugged in and responsive to Gavi implementing countries, and to start creating a safer and more collaborative workplace in which everyone at Gavi can better flourish and feel supported. Our decisions have been supported by insights from surveys; independent external data; and a consultative process with stakeholders, employees and our Gavi people leaders.

Collaboration for impact

The vital importance of collaboration and partnership to Gavi's mission within the global health landscape were exemplified by COVAX. Since its inception in April 2020, the Facility played a central role in raising the COVID-19 vaccination rate in lower-income and middle-income COVAX-supported countries to 57%, compared with a global average of 66%, helping to avert the deaths of 2.7 million people in lower-income countries.

This will be the final COVAX update to the Board, and I want to take this opportunity to thank and honour COVAX colleagues for their dedication and commitment to saving lives, increasing COVID-19 vaccine equity and making history in the process.

As COVAX draws to a close, and we bid a fond farewell to a significant number of colleagues, we continue to actively engage with the relevant processes and initiatives

that will shape the global architecture for health emergencies and pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPPR) in the wake of COVID-19.

As September's round of high-level meetings at the UN General Assembly made clear, immunisation occupies a unique position at the intersection of Universal Health Coverage; pandemic and health emergency prevention, preparedness and response; and primary health care. The role of Gavi in the global health architecture was also recognised in the G7 Hiroshima Leaders' Communiqué as well as in the G20 Health Ministerial Outcome document in Gandhinagar, India.

This centrality of immunisation to multiple agendas makes it incumbent on us to work ever more closely and intentionally with our key partners in pursuit of our Gavi 5.1 must-wins, and as we continue to develop our Gavi 6.0 strategy.

As we look towards 2024 and beyond, our recently cemented tripartite Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union Commission and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention will be crucial enablers of our push towards must-wins on revitalising the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine programme; restoring routine immunisation and reaching zero-dose children; and launching the malaria vaccine programme.

The African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator (AVMA) that the Board will consider establishing could be a new critical milestone in Gavi's contribution to PPPR and of our strong collaboration with African stakeholders. This new instrument is considered in the framework of a strengthened approach to PPPR for the Alliance, and in addition to the establishment of a Fund Response Window for the Day Zero Financing Facility, and of funding for a coalition of vaccine partners for PPPR. The Alliance is building on its comparative advantage to make sure the world is better prepared for the next pandemic.

This comes in addition to our increased collaboration with the Global Fund and other global health organisations.

Looking ahead with optimism

Our recent results put the Alliance in a strong position to achieve the majority of our Gavi 5.1 goals, but there remain substantial challenges to address.

The successful start to Nigeria's HPV vaccine introduction builds on October introductions in Bangladesh and Cambodia, with a further campaign planned in Togo before year end. The past four months have seen a step change in our progress towards reaching over 86 million girls with this life-saving vaccine, making it an achievable target by end 2025.

The picture on the restoration of routine immunisation in the wake of COVID-19 is more mixed. The April 2023 launch of the Big Catch-up and an increase in health system strengthening (HSS) investments to extend our reach to zero-dose children

will help to accelerate progress. At present, we will need to see a 34% reduction in zero-dose children over three years to achieve our 2025 target.

On malaria, developments in November brought us to the cusp of a new era of vaccination against one of humanity's oldest enemies. On 22 November 330,000 doses of the RTS,S malaria vaccine arrived on the airport tarmac in Yaoundé, making Cameroon the first non-pilot country to receive the vaccine.

This first delivery will be followed by 1.7 million doses for Burkina Faso, Liberia, Niger and Sierra Leone, as well as the original Malaria Vaccine Implementation Programme (MVIP) pilot countries of Ghana, Kenya and Malawi. A second vaccine, R21, may be ready to introduce to countries by mid-2024, helping to broaden access and accelerate coverage. However, malaria is currently our most expensive vaccine, and therefore it is critical that we focus on driving towards more affordable pricing.

As Gavi works with countries, the Global Fund and other partners to introduce malaria vaccines alongside an optimised package of other essential interventions, we will also be coordinating investments to strengthen key health system functions that can be "benefit multipliers" for public health.

Recent successes on HPV and malaria attest to the fact that our most crucial partnerships are those with the countries we support. In addition to our Board Chair's high-level delegation to Cameroon this week, I led high-level visits to Nigeria and Zambia during November. I will lead an additional high-level delegation to Mozambique planned for the week after the Board meeting, before returning to Switzerland to close out the year with our staff.

On each of my visits to Gavi-supported countries, I was struck by the unwavering commitment of our staff; by the commitment to immunisation of national authorities and our partners from civil society organisations; and by the rigor and openness that has characterised our collaborative work to strengthen mutual accountability and partnership, and drive improvements in the way we work as an Alliance.

The evolving needs of countries are foremost in mind as we prepare for the Board retreat on Gavi 6.0 next week, and I hope that this was demonstrated during the deep-dives on health system and immunisation strengthening (HSIS), and Gavi's policies on eligibility, transition and co-financing earlier this week.

Operational Excellence will be a critical enabler. The finalisation and implementation of our strategic workforce plan in the first half of 2024, together with our culture change efforts, starting with our leaders, will be critical for a more effective and efficient Secretariat and Alliance. Our goal is an engaged and motivated workforce fit for purpose, and thriving in a constructive and safe leadership environment that promotes teamwork and encourages the achievement of organisational goals through the development of our people.

The decisions in front of us will help determine the direction of Gavi to the end of the decade and the success of the next replenishment. In so doing, our decisions will

shape the lives of millions of the world's children and our collective future on this planet. As I look ahead, I continue to be inspired by the huge potential for our Alliance to be an even greater force for good in the world. In a world in which many of the principles of multilateralism are increasingly contested, the Vaccine Alliance can continue to be a champion of the transformative power of human ingenuity, solidarity, partnership and compassion.

I very much look forward to meeting you all again in the coming weeks and laying the ground for another successful year ahead. My sincere thank you in advance for your continued support, constructive feedback and strategic insights and decisions as we continue to deliver on our Alliance mission as One Gavi.