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Gavi's approach to engagement with middle-income countries



A key tool for addressing threats to equity and sustainability

In December 2020, the Gavi Board approved a new approach to engagement with middle-income countries¹ in the Gavi 5.0 strategic period (the “MICs Approach”). Serving as a key tool for addressing threats to the equity and sustainability of routine immunisation programmes, the MICs Approach contributes to Gavi’s overall vision of leaving no one behind with immunisation.

While most countries maintain programme performance following transition from Gavi support, some have gaps in programmatic capacities, which can create a risk of backsliding in vaccine coverage. This risk has increasingly become a reality in the context of the pandemic, presenting a significant threat to intra-country equity, as backsliding disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable populations.

Some former-Gavi eligible countries are also missing critical, life-saving vaccines, presenting a threat to inter-country equity. Of the 19 countries that have transitioned as of 2022, 13 have not yet introduced at least one of pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV), rotavirus vaccine, or human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. Despite higher immunisation investments on average, several never-Gavi eligible middle-income countries (i.e. those that have not previously been eligible for Gavi support) similarly lag behind in introducing these vaccines relative to countries eligible for Gavi support, furthering the threat to inter-country equity. Moreover, these vaccines are, in fact, available in many countries, but often only in the private sector, and are therefore out of reach for the most vulnerable.

In this context, the MICs Approach has two overarching objectives:

- 1 To prevent backsliding in vaccine coverage in former-Gavi eligible countries; and
- 2 To drive the sustainable introduction of key missing vaccines in both former- and select never-Gavi eligible countries.

Country eligibility

Eligibility under the MICs Approach includes former-Gavi eligible countries, never-Gavi eligible lower middle-income countries (LMICs) and additional IDA-eligible economies. Table 1 presents the list of eligible countries as of July 2022, all of which will retain their eligibility through the end of the Gavi 5.0 strategic period. Note that the list will be updated to include any countries reclassified as LMICs based on their 2022 or 2023 GNI p.c., released by the World Bank in 2023 and 2024 respectively. Additional former-Gavi eligible countries will also be added as they transition from Gavi support.

Support through the MICs Approach

Gavi aims to achieve the MICs Approach objectives by working at two levels.

Firstly, Gavi will work to address systemic issues that commonly stand in the way of sustainable and equitable new vaccine introductions, as well as shared risk factors for backsliding in vaccine coverage. These support modalities are collectively referred to as foundational building blocks.

At the same time, Gavi remains flexible and responsive to country-specific challenges, and further contributes toward the MICs Approach objectives by deploying targeted and catalytic tools. The flexible nature of Gavi’s support is critical, recognising the heterogeneity among middle-income countries.

All support is aligned to the MICs Approach Theory of Change, which clearly articulates the pathways through which Gavi seeks to affect change.

¹ In this document, the term countries is used to denote both countries and economies. Gavi’s engagement does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Gavi concerning the legal status of any country, territory or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of frontiers or boundaries.

Table 1

Countries and economies eligible under the MICs Approach as of July 2022

Former-Gavi eligible countries			Never-Gavi eligible countries*		
Angola	Guyana	Sri Lanka	Algeria	Kosovo	Saint Lucia
Armenia	Honduras	Timor-Leste	Belize	Lebanon	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Azerbaijan	Indonesia	Ukraine	Cabo Verde	Maldives	Samoa
Bhutan	Kiribati	Uzbekistan	Dominica	Marshall Islands	Tonga
Bolivia	Mongolia	Viet Nam	Egypt	Micronesia	Tunisia
Cuba	Nicaragua		El Salvador	Morocco	Tuvalu
Georgia	Moldova		Eswatini	Occupied Palestinian territory	Vanuatu
			Fiji	Philippines	Venezuela
			Grenada		
			Iran		

*Includes World Bank classified lower middle-income countries, IDA-eligible economies and Venezuela following Gavi Board approval as eligible under the MICs Approach in the absence of a World Bank classification.

Foundational building blocks

Foundational building blocks are designed to strengthen the enabling environment for new vaccine introductions and sustainable immunisation programmes. Gavi works hand-in-hand with core and expanded partners to achieve these outcomes, with efforts including:

- Galvanising political commitment for sustainable and equitable routine immunisation programmes and new vaccine introductions;
- Providing technical assistance to address shared barriers to new vaccine introductions and risk factors for backsliding across multiple countries; and
- Supporting peer-to-peer learning platforms to help countries and partners share best practices and lessons learnt.

Targeted and catalytic tools

The foundational building blocks are complemented by targeted and catalytic tools that respond to country-specific needs.

Support to mitigate backsliding

Gavi provides support for Targeted Interventions to mitigate backsliding in former Gavi-eligible countries that have seen significant and sustained reductions in vaccine coverage. As with all investments under the MICs Approach, Targeted Interventions are designed with equity and sustainability at the centre. The MICs Approach aims to restore coverage rates by beginning at the periphery, identifying and reaching zero-dose children and missed communities. Interventions are focused at the subnational level and tailored to local contexts.

Support for Targeted Interventions is intended to be highly targeted, and therefore a pre-screening process is undertaken by Gavi to identify countries that could benefit most from this support, and where there is greatest potential to reach zero-dose children and restore immunisation coverage. On this basis, Gavi is continuously monitoring the situation in former-Gavi eligible countries. Thus far, four countries have been prioritised for support: Angola, Bolivia, Honduras, and Indonesia. Additional countries may be invited to apply pending the outcome of the aforementioned pre-screening process.

Former-Gavi eligible countries facing challenges related to restoring routine immunisation coverage rates are strongly encouraged to reach out to their Country Engagement Manager/Senior Country Manager to discuss whether there may be opportunities for collaboration.

Support to drive new vaccine introductions

Gavi also offers a suite of targeted and catalytic tools to help drive the sustainable and equitable introduction of PCV, rotavirus, and HPV vaccines in both former- and never-Gavi eligible countries:

- Technical assistance helps countries drive forward new vaccine introductions that are both equitable and sustainable. This support may be provided by Gavi's core partners as well as expanded partners (e.g., civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, academic institutions, etc.) depending on country-specific needs and the comparative advantages of in-country partners.
- Flexible funding helps countries cover one-off costs related to activities that are traditionally unfunded or challenging to fund, but that are critical to achieving sustainable and equitable new vaccine introductions. For example, a country may need funding to execute a communication campaign to generate demand for a new vaccine among marginalised communities.

- Vaccine catalytic financing helps countries to accelerate new vaccine introductions. While financing for the ongoing procurement of new vaccines is not available under the MICs Approach, Gavi may provide vaccine financing for half the first birth (or target) cohort.

Finally, Gavi supports sustainable access to PCV, rotavirus, and HPV vaccines, including access to sustainable prices, in collaboration with UNICEF Supply Division, by helping to reduce barriers that countries commonly face in accessing pooled procurement mechanisms.

The suite of support for new vaccine introductions was approved by the Gavi Board in June 2022. Gavi is refining the processes for accessing this support. Please contact your Country Engagement Manager/Senior Country Manager for additional details.



If you have questions about the MICs Approach please contact your Country Engagement Manager/Senior Country Manager

