

## Gavi Alliance Programme and Policy Committee Meeting

1 March 2021

Virtual meeting

### 1. Chair's report

- 1.1 Finding a quorum of members present, the meeting commenced at 14.31 Geneva time on 1 March 2021. Helen Rees, Programme and Policy Committee (PPC) Chair, chaired the meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair gave a particular welcome to the two PPC members who were attending their first formal PPC meeting: Bernhard Braune representing the Germany/France/Luxembourg/European Commission/Ireland constituency, and Karin Westerberg representing the Norway/Finland/Netherlands/Sweden constituency.
- 1.3 As the PPC Charter allows for any Board or Alternate Board members to observe Committee meetings, the PPC Chair had approved the participation of Megan Cain.
- 1.4 Standing declarations of interest were tabled to the Committee (Doc 01 in the Committee pack). The Chair reminded those Committee members who had not yet completed their annual declarations of interest to please do so as soon as possible.
- 1.5 The Chair noted for the record that Alejandro Cravioto, an independent expert on the PPC in his capacity as the SAGE chair, has become a member of the WHO Independent Allocation of Vaccines Group (IAVG), which was being proposed to make recommendations for the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. As he is not a voting member of the PPC he will not need to recuse himself from any related decisions. The Chair also noted that Lubna Hashmat (Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)), Robin Nandy (UNICEF), and Kate O'Brien (World Health Organization (WHO)) will recuse themselves from the decision on the COVAX buffer, but remain free to participate in the discussion. They represent entities that could potentially avail themselves of the COVAX buffer and that sit on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).
- 1.6 The Chair also mentioned that a Discussion Board had been made available on BoardEffect so that PPC members could post their comments and questions prior to the meeting. She encouraged PPC members to make more use of this tool going forward, noting that only one PPC member had done so for this meeting.

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## 2. COVAX buffer

- 2.1 Aurélia Nguyen, Managing Director, Office of the COVAX Facility, provided introductory remarks and explained that there had been good progress since the informal PPC discussion on this topic in February 2021. She noted that the earlier PPC comments had helped shape and push forward the work that is coming to the PPC at this meeting.
- 2.2 Sanne Wendes, Lead, Design & Operationalisation, COVAX Facility, outlined the key updates since the informal PPC discussion and set out the recommendations for PPC consideration.

### *Discussion*

- PPC members noted that the populations for which the humanitarian buffer would be used are often the same populations that would be left out of the broader Gavi 5.0 agenda. It will therefore be important to use this as a marker for Gavi's zero-dose work. The Secretariat noted that learnings would be drawn from this work as well as from experience to date with the Gavi Fragility, Emergency, Refugees Policy.
- PPC members supported the COVAX buffer being designed as a mechanism of last resort. PPC members asked whether any enforceability mechanism would be built in to make sure countries had made appropriate efforts to include all populations in their National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP). It was noted that putting in place strict enforceability clauses could lead to delayed deployment. Instead, the design has focused on using the IASC process, proactive guidance, and multiple opportunities for dialogue to try to address this. This advocacy work will continue as the Humanitarian Buffer is operationalised and implemented, noting that the responsibility for vaccinating these groups will always lie with national governments.
- The PPC asked for details of how the COVAX buffer might work in practice using the example of the Rohingya population in Bangladesh. The Secretariat clarified that in that case of the Rohingya, Bangladesh has included this population in its NDVP, so doses would come through normal allocation channels. Delivery costs would be sourced through donor funded programmes.
- PPC members also asked for clarification on contextual parity as well as on whether there would be any specific consideration on products that would be better suited for conflict or fragile settings. It was clarified that to the extent possible, Humanitarian Buffer doses allocated to applicants would be the same product as those allocated through the standard country allocation process, also in an effort to avoid indemnity and liability issues. However, the operational feasibility of deploying different types of vaccines in these settings will also be explored, and an assessment of the operational feasibility of implementing specific vaccines in these settings would be required.
- Several PPC members asked about the contingency provision and suggested the decision-making process for the humanitarian buffer and the contingency buffer

would need to be in sync. One PPC member queried whether the contingency provision might allow non-COVAX countries to access the buffer without joining, and then to circumvent and apply it for humanitarian purposes. It was clarified that the contingency provision was currently under development as it is not considered relevant until all COVAX Facility participants have received a basic number of vaccines through COVAX. It would also be designed to avoid such a 'loop-hole' thereby avoiding this concern.

- One PPC member queried whether international frontline workers would also fall under the humanitarian buffer. It was explained that international workers should be part of the NDVP.
- PPC members asked for confirmation that criteria would be put in place so that successful humanitarian agency applicants have the capacity required to undertake this work. PPC members also indicated that smaller, national-level humanitarian agencies should have access to the buffer, and that CSOs should be included in review processes. It was confirmed that this is part of the design and that it is hoped that one element the IASC will bring to the table is good knowledge of appropriate humanitarian agencies in each country. As the IASC is comprised of CSOs they are therefore core to the review process.
- On the proposal to ring-fence 5% of the US\$ 150 million of exceptional delivery funding previously approved by the Board for delivery costs for Humanitarian Buffer doses, it was suggested that the process needs to be streamlined to allow humanitarian agencies to apply for doses and delivery costs at same time. Some PPC members asked about how a determination would be made that a case was exceptional for the inclusion of delivery costs. The Secretariat clarified that this is currently under development, and will include the aim of ensuring that there is effective and equitable distribution of doses.
- Several PPC members mentioned the need for robust monitoring and evaluation approaches. Tracking implementation will be very important to avoid any overinflation of numbers.
- One PPC member queried whether a risk management plan is needed for the buffer. It was explained that the COVAX buffer will be part of the overall risk management framework established for the COVAX Facility.
- Another PPC member asked for more detail to be provided in the Board paper, including on a more refined picture of who these populations are, an analysis of whether they have been included in the NDVPs submitted to date, and on how the assessment will be made on whether a proposal will be considered acceptable or not.
- In relation to the exact meaning of 'for which no other funding is available' in part b) of the recommendation, the Secretariat noted that in other areas of work, Gavi often undertakes due diligence to assess if any other major funders (e.g. the World Bank) are able to provide any funding. It is envisioned to put a similar process in place for these cases.

- One PPC member asked for further consideration of indemnity and liability issues as they relate to humanitarian agencies as the design moves forward.
- It was noted that this is a learning agenda for COVAX, Gavi and the humanitarian agencies that have been engaging on the design. There will be regular opportunities to course correct if it does not seem that all are comfortable with how things are progressing. The PPC requested regular updates on progress.
- PPC members requested that in the next PPC discussion on the COVAX that country representatives provide their perspective and feedback.

### **Decision One**

The Gavi Alliance Programme and Policy Committee **recommended** to the Gavi Alliance Board that it:

- a) **Note** the scope of the Humanitarian Buffer as outlined in Annex A to Doc 02 and **approve** reserving 5% of COVAX AMC funding for doses to be deployed via the COVAX Buffer, **noting** that this will be progressively financed as AMC funding increases. The funds reserved for the Buffer will be reviewed at such a time that the Facility is terminated with a presumption that unused funds will be released to the Gavi COVAX AMC;
- b) **Approve** amending the decision approved by the Board in December 2020 to read as follows: *“Approved US\$ 150 million to provide exceptional support, if required and on a case-by-case basis, to AMC92 participants, and in cases of support for the delivery of humanitarian buffer doses to also include Self Financing Participants and humanitarian agencies, to address critical vaccine delivery gaps for which no other funding is available, subject to this funding being mobilised by Gavi”*;
- c) **Approve** that of the US\$ 150 million for delivery costs up to 5% be used to support the deployment of the Humanitarian Buffer;
- d) **Approve** delegating decision making on Humanitarian Buffer dose allocation to the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Emergency Directors Group, which will report back to the Gavi Board on allocation of the Humanitarian Buffer doses and associated AMC funding; and
- e) **Approve** the Secretariat reporting back to the Programme and Policy Committee and Board by end 2021 on the operation of the Humanitarian Buffer, including against available key performance metrics, the number of requests received and approved and the timeliness of that approval, the number of Humanitarian Buffer doses allocated and delivery support funding. The Secretariat will also report back on activities undertaken to ensure the Humanitarian Buffer is a measure of last resort.

*Lubna Hashmat (CSO), Robin Nandy (UNICEF) and Kate O'Brien (WHO) recused themselves and did not vote on Decision One above.*

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**3. Review of decisions**

- 3.1 Joanne Goetz, Head, Governance, reviewed the decision language with the Committee which was approved by them.

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**4. Any other business**

- 4.1 Several PPC also congratulated Aurélia Nguyen on her recent recognition on the Time100 NEXT list as an exceptional emerging leader shaping the future for her work on the COVAX Facility.
- 4.2 After determining there was no further business, the meeting was brought to a close.

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Mrs Joanne Goetz  
Secretary to the Meeting

## Attachment A

### Participants

#### Committee Members

- Helen Rees, Chair
- Ahmed Abdallah
- Edna Yolani Batres
- Joan Benson
- Bernard Braune
- Naomi Dumbrell
- Susan Elden
- Vandana Gurnani
- Lubna Hashmat
- Violaine Mitchell
- Robin Nandy
- Kate O'Brien
- Kelechi Ohiri
- Sai Prasad
- Michael Kent Ranson
- William Schluter
- Karin Westerberg
- Seth Berkley, Chief Executive Officer
- Alejandro Cravioto

#### Gavi Secretariat

- Anuradha Gupta
- Nadine Abu-Sway
- Hannah Burris
- Santiago Cornejo
- Joanne Goetz
- Kim Harper
- Brenda Killen
- Thabani Maphosa
- Meegan Murray-Lopez
- Aurélia Nguyen
- Marie-Ange Saraka-Yao
- Derrick Sim
- Sanne Wendes

#### Regrets

- None

#### Other Board members attending

- Megan Cain

#### Observers

- Muluken Desta, Special Adviser to the AFRO Anglophone constituency
- Ruzan Gyurjyan, Special Adviser to the EURO constituency
- Pratap Kumar Special Adviser to the EMRO constituency
- Rolando Pinel, Special Adviser to the PAHO constituency
- Oulech Taha, Special Adviser to the AFRO Francophone/Lusophone constituency
- Stella Villares, Special Adviser to the Board Chair