

COVID-19 and Public Health Emergencies: Preparedness, Response and Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic shows the importance of resilient health systems, and of prioritising prevention and preparedness. Inequities within and between countries result in disproportionate impacts to vulnerable populations and reinforce the importance of strengthening and expanding primary health care and routine immunisation.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is taking urgent action on three fronts to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic: (i) making sure we protect the next generation through routine immunisation where possible and campaigns where necessary; (ii) reinforcing health and immunisation, by reprogramming up to 10 percent of health system strengthening grants and providing flexibilities to support under our mechanism of engagement with partners, as a means to equip countries to respond COVID-19 and rebuilding services for routine immunisation and prepare for distribution of SARS-CoV-2 vaccines; (iii) fast-tracking development of SARS-CoV-2 vaccines for equitable access and distribution.

Ahead of the 2020 World Health Assembly, please find below some suggestions that you may want to consider for your interventions and engagements:

Minimise disruption of routine immunisation and ensure resilience of health systems to prevent further Vaccine Preventable Disease (VPD) outbreaks during the COVID-19 pandemic by:

- **Prioritising services and support for vulnerable populations, including low income groups, internally displaced persons, refugees, people in conflict affected environments, and those in crowded urban settings.** Implementing lockdowns and control measures will be challenging in these settings, increasing risk of outbreaks.
- **Safeguarding routine immunisation programs** During the Ebola crisis, measles outbreaks killed 2.5 times as many people as Ebola. Curfews and lockdowns for social isolation prevent parents attending immunisation clinics for regular scheduled vaccines and school closures interrupt HPV vaccination, increasing cervical cancer risk.
- **Allocating sufficient resources to building resilient health systems** with strong Primary Health Care as the cornerstone to achieving UHC
- **Calling for a fully funded Gavi replenishment on June 4** which is critical for health system strengthening, delivery of routine immunization and development, manufacturing and distribution of eventual SARS-CoV2 vaccines.
- **Endorsing and promoting country ownership of the Immunisation Agenda 2030**

Speed up and harmonise the development, production and equitable access and distribution of safe, effective and affordable vaccines by:

- **Supporting the ACT Accelerator** - an important step in making sure we coordinate our efforts and leverage strengths in the health ecosystem to make critical tools such as vaccines available quickly to those who need them the most.
- **Supporting equitable access to vaccines** within and between countries with a focus on those in greatest need.
- **Preparing countries ahead of time to deliver** vaccines to their populations as soon as they are available

- Ensuring resilience, capacity and safety of frontline health workers.

Proactively consider the gender perspective across COVID-19 response to help address gender-related barriers to access to health and contribute to the wider global goal of gender equality by:

- **Prioritising mental & physical well-being of women who represent 70% of the global health and social workforce** and thus are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 response in addition to carrying gendered roles of caregiving, more at risk of infection and facing social stigma and discrimination surrounding COVID-19.
- **Collecting sex-disaggregated data to understand the gendered impact of COVID-19** to better identify needs and inform interventions to protect the most at-risk individuals and communities.