

Overwhelming evidence demonstrates the benefits of immunisation as one of the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions known. Over the past few decades, immunisation has achieved many things, including the eradication of smallpox, lowered the global incidence of polio by 99 percent and dramatically reduced illness, disability and death from diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, pneumonia, meningitis A, diarrhoea and measles.

The impact of immunisation goes beyond the health benefits. There is a growing body of evidence to demonstrate the negative effect of some vaccine-preventable diseases on a child's cognitive abilities, physical strength and performance at school. All of which have consequences for the individual's long-term productivity.

Minimising the burden of illness through immunisation will positively affect a child's ability to attend school and attain high education levels.<sup>i</sup> Studies also demonstrate a positive correlation between immunisation and the quality of learning. For example a study in the Philippines established that the immunisation of children with DTP<sup>ii</sup>, Polio, TB and measles vaccines by the age of two yielded improved cognitive function at age 10, as measured by test scores on language, math, and IQ tests.<sup>iii</sup> Another study in Bangladesh demonstrates the significant positive effects of maternal tetanus vaccination on schooling outcomes of children from low socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>iv</sup>

*“Education and health are a mutually-reinforcing sisterhood. They go hand-in-hand in the drive to lift people out of poverty and give them an opportunity to develop their full human potential.”*

*Margaret Chan, Director  
General World Health  
Organisation*

Despite scientific advances in life changing vaccines, in 2012 more than 22 million children were unimmunised against basic childhood illnesses. This means that one in five children is denied a fair start in life. The post-2015 development agenda must recognise the value of vaccines as an investment to maximise healthy lives and one of the key health interventions positively impacting the quality of learning.

The GAVI Alliance is calling for a post-2015 health indicator to embrace the notion of a “fully immunised child”. We want to ensure that children everywhere (irrespective of geography, wealth or gender) have a better shot at living up to their full potential: intellectually and physically.

For more information:

<http://www.gavialliance.org/library/news/statements/2012/seth-berkley-on-health-in-the-post-2015-development-agenda/>

*This information note will be updated as new evidence becomes available. Feedback and advice are welcome and can be sent to [GAVIadvocacypublicpolicy@gavialliance.org](mailto:GAVIadvocacypublicpolicy@gavialliance.org)*

## References

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<sup>i</sup> Bärnighausen T, Bloom DE, Canning D, Friedman A, Levine O, O'Brien J, Privor-Dumm J, Walker D. (2011). Rethinking the benefits and costs of childhood vaccination: the example of the Haemophilus influenza type b vaccine. *Vaccine*, 29(13): 2371-2380

<sup>ii</sup> Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, a combination vaccine against three infectious diseases in humans: diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough) and tetanus

<sup>iii</sup> Bloom DE. (2011). The Value of Vaccination. *Adv Exp Med Biol*, 697:1–8.

<sup>iv</sup> Canning D, Razzaque A, Driessen J, Walker D G, Streatfield P K, Yunus M. (2011). The effect of maternal tetanus immunization on children's schooling attainment in Matlab, Bangladesh: follow-up of a randomized trial. *Social Science & Medicine*, 72: 1429-1436.