

SUBJECT: CONSENT AGENDA: ONGOING AND PLANNED SUPPORT FOR SYRIA

Agenda item: 10f

Category: For Decision

Section A: Introduction

- Based on a recommendation from the Programme and Policy Committee (PPC) this paper asks the Board to extend remaining 2017/2018 support for Syria (approved by the Board in December 2016) for use in 2019, while a new proposal for support is being developed.
- In July 2018, the World Bank classified Syria as a low income country, making it eligible for Gavi's portfolio of support as of 1 January 2019.
- In its discussion on this topic, the PPC asked the Secretariat to ensure that it engages with all humanitarian and development partners and stakeholders in developing a proposal for support and in the implementation of support in Syria. The PPC also stressed that Gavi ensures support is equitably accessible across the whole country. Finally, the PPC requested regular updates on the progress made in Syria.

Section B: Ongoing and planned Alliance support for Syria

- 1.1 In its eighth year, the Syria crisis remains complex and marked by suffering, destruction and disregard for human life. At least 5.3 million children out of a 13 million population are affected by the conflict, with an estimated 7 million refugees residing outside Syria and 6.2 million internally displaced. The World Bank estimates the cost of the war for Syria between 2011-2017 at US\$ 226 billion.
- 1.2 Over the past few years, no recent estimates have been available for Syria's gross national income (GNI) per capita¹. However, in its latest GNI release in July 2018, the World Bank has classified Syria as a low-income country, with a GNI per capita below US\$ 995. **Under Gavi's Eligibility and Transition Policy, this makes Syria eligible for Gavi's portfolio of support as of 1 January 2019.**²

¹ However, for the previous three years, WHO had classified Syria as a grade 3 humanitarian emergency and the World Bank classified it as a lower middle-income country.

² This includes new vaccine support, financial support for health systems strengthening and operational costs for campaigns/introductions, as well as access to the cold chain equipment optimisation platform (CCEOP) and technical assistance through the Partners' Engagement Framework. In addition, Syria is eligible for flexibilities under Gavi's Fragility, Emergencies,

- 1.3 The Gavi Alliance Board, in December 2016, approved exceptional support to Syria of US\$ 25 million annually for 2017 and 2018, for a total approved amount of US\$ 50 million (“Approved Amount”). This support was temporary and limited, with the purpose of financing vaccines and cold chain equipment. This was a strategic decision given that Syria’s eligibility status for Gavi support, as stated above, could not be determined. The exceptional support for Syria for 2017-2018 has been channelled through UNICEF and has been managed as part of the wider humanitarian response with activities in the whole of Syria coordinated through the health cluster approach³, led by WHO with UNICEF, other UN agencies and NGOs/CSO partners.
- 1.4 Gavi’s exceptional support to Syria has contributed to the overall stability of the immunisation programme by avoiding stock-outs and re-introducing services in a number of sites. The support has also contributed to the control of outbreaks of diseases such as polio and measles, as well as helping meet urgent system strengthening and cold chain needs. Through Gavi’s focus on data, efforts were also made to strengthen data quality and reporting. One key learning from Gavi’s engagement with Syria was the critical need to work through the health cluster to ensure equitable access to immunisation services. However, underfunding of the annual Humanitarian Response Plans remains a key challenge.
- 1.5 From the total grant of US\$ 39.8 million approved by Gavi⁴, US\$ 36.6 million has been disbursed to date, with US\$ 22.7 million for vaccines (covering Penta, Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) and Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR))⁵ and US\$ 13.9 million disbursed for cold chain, with installation of cold chain equipment to be finalised before the end of the year. This leaves US\$ 3.2 million of funding transferred to UNICEF unspent, along with US\$ 10.2 million of the Approved Amount which has not yet been committed, amounting to a total remaining sum of US\$ 13.4 million (the “Remaining Approved Amount”).

Refugees Policy as it is classified as a country facing fragility challenges as well as a country in an emergency situation.

3 The health cluster approach, underpinned by UN Security Council Resolution 2165, authorises UN agencies to use routes across conflict lines and border crossings in Turkey and Jordan to deliver humanitarian aid.

4 In accordance with the proposal developed by UNICEF and partners, and subsequently approved through an independent review.

5 The proposal submitted by UNICEF, in alignment with the 2017 Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan between UNOCHA and Syrian government, sought support for the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine which is in Syria’s existing immunisation schedule. While Gavi supports measles-rubella vaccine it does not support MMR. Yet, as the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan remained under-funded and as it was unclear if funding for this would otherwise be available, and given the humanitarian situation in Syria and the potential disruptive impact of the country switching vaccines, MMR was exceptionally supported by Gavi (as communicated to the June 2017 Gavi Alliance Board).

- 1.6 It is proposed that the Remaining Approved Amount be used to continue to cover vaccine and, where applicable, cold chain costs for Syria in 2019⁶. To this end, an extension of the grant agreement with UNICEF will be put in place by the end of 2018.
- 1.7 Given Syria's new status as a Gavi Eligible Country, this would allow time for the Alliance to work with Syrian stakeholders on the development of a new proposal for Gavi support. Given the ongoing conflict and the infeasibility of an inclusive government-led portfolio planning process at this stage, Gavi's engagement model will have to be tailored. Drawing on the experience gained from the engagement in Syria up to now, it is proposed that the Gavi Secretariat, with UNICEF and WHO, coordinate the portfolio planning process with the health authorities through the existing health cluster.
- 1.8 It is anticipated that the proposal will be ready for review by Gavi's Independent Review Committee by the end of 2019. The PPC and Board will be apprised of the progress of this process through regular updates. Standard Gavi policies and procedures will be followed to review, approve and monitor support to Syria. If exceptions to the Gavi support model will be required, outside of those available under the Fragility, Emergencies, Refugees policy, those will be brought to the PPC and Board for consideration and guidance.

Section C: Actions requested of the Board

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

Approve extending 2017/2018 support for Syria approved by the Gavi Alliance Board in December 2016 for use in 2019.

⁶ The estimated annual vaccines cost for Gavi supported vaccines for 2019 for Syria is US\$ 10-11 million, covering support for penta, IPV and MMR, leaving around US\$ 2 million for support to cold chain, if needed.