

The empowerment of women, girls and adolescents for their health and wellbeing is necessary for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since the last Women Deliver Conference in 2016, gender equality and equity have received increased political attention. Yet gender inequality and inequities continue to severely constrain the global development agenda.

The Women Deliver 2019 Global Conference on the theme of *Power. Progress. Change* provides a unique opportunity for the global community to convene, share new ideas and accelerate momentum to empower women, girls and adolescents worldwide.

Women at the forefront of immunisation

- Women enable access to life-saving and preventive services like immunisation and primary health care systems, most often as primary caregivers and also as health workers, community and opinion leaders.
- Immunisation saves lives and ensures that children – boys and girls, can realise their ambitions and human rights. Since 2000 Gavi has achieved transformation at pace and scale reaching 700 million children with immunisation and preventing more than 10 million future deaths.
- Health services are overwhelmingly delivered by women, with female health workers facing multiple barriers which undermine their well-being and livelihoods, holding back broader gender equality and negatively impacting health systems. Gavi invests approximately US\$ 100 million a year on human resources for health, including in-service education and training of female health workers.

Immunisation: a gender-equal intervention

Immunisation is a gender-equal intervention keeping girls, adolescents and women healthy

- During 2017, about 85% of infants worldwide (116.2 million infants) were immunised -with no significant difference in global coverage between boys and girls.
- When women have low status in their family or community, their capacity to act on their own and on behalf of their children, in turn their access to health services. Strengthening routine immunisation contributes to addressing gender-related barriers as it puts health systems and services in place that facilitate access, and brings them into contact with primary health services.

Gavi works in low income countries to ensure that immunisation is equally available to everyone. We support countries to overcome gender-related barriers and provide vaccines that specifically benefit girls and women.

- Rubella-containing vaccines can protect girls and women against the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth or serious disabilities in babies. So far, over 211 million children have been immunised through Gavi -supported measles-rubella campaigns.
- The HPV vaccine protects girls and women against the main causes of cervical cancer and can prevent up to 90% of cervical cancer cases.
- Gavi support for HPV vaccine is a game changer in the global fight against cervical cancer, with 1.5 million girls immunised since 2013 and another 30 million to be vaccinated in the coming years.

Immunisation: a platform to reach girls, adolescents and women with care and services

Immunisation is the only intervention that brings majority of children and their families into contact with primary health services five or more times during the first year of a child's life

- In 2017, routine immunisation in 68 Gavi supported countries resulted in 550 million health system touchpoints.

- Immunisation programmes put systems and services in place that facilitate access to other health services, such as nutrition and micronutrient supplementation, malaria and maternal health services.
- Immunisation, when closely coordinated with other primary healthcare programmes as part of broader health systems, can be a platform for achieving sustainable Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the SDGs.

HPV vaccine is an opportunity to strengthen health systems to reach adolescent girls with integrated health services for transformative benefits throughout their life course and beyond.

- HPV vaccine is often the first time adolescent girls reconnect with the health system since childhood. It offers a unique opportunity to provide additional health services, ranging from nutrition, hygiene, reproductive health and health promotion.
- Gavi has played a key role in facilitating the sustainable supply of HPV vaccines for low income countries for as low as US\$ 4.50 per dose compared to over US\$ 100 in developed countries.

Women and men are both agents of change in addressing gender inequities in immunisation. They play different roles as facilitators, as influencers, and as clients in enabling their communities to make informed choices about their health and to reach full potential as active and productive members of society

- Immunisation disproportionately benefits women and their children. Prioritising increased access to life-saving immunisation provides an entry point to protect the health of women and girls against infectious and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). In turn providing a positive impact on health across the life-course of women, newborns, children and adolescents.

Gavi is leveraging gender in its policies, programmes and practice

- Gavi aims to incorporate a gender perspective into all its grant approval, monitoring and evaluation procedures and activities. This includes developing gender sensitive- indicators and supporting the strengthening of health information systems in cooperation with partners.
- Gavi one of the top performers out of 198 global health organisations surveyed in the 2nd Global 50/50 Report focusing on gender-related policies and practices advancing gender equality. It was also the first global health organisation certified as an equal salary employer.

Gavi: a platform for collaboration with partners that strives for gender equity

Collaboration with partners, through gender sensitive interventions, is critical to realising gender equity and complementing each other's efforts to promote gender equality

- Girl Effect and Gavi are working together in Rwanda, Ethiopia and Malawi to leverage the power of brands to build girls' demand for the HPV vaccine and encourage girls to use health services at critical times in their lives, and to drive positive health outcomes more broadly.
- Gavi's partnership with Unilever on increasing demand for immunisation and handwashing with soap in Uttar Pradesh, India, is tackling gender-related barriers by encouraging father's role in early childhood development and by encouraging spousal communication.
- Gavi's Innovation for Uptake, Scale and Equity in Immunisation (INFUSE) platform is addressing gender equality issues such as the lack of gender-disaggregated data, the need to empower girls and mothers, and the challenge of reaching the most marginalised children – often girls.
- Community platforms and movements and women civil society organisations such as SEWA provide a unique platform for addressing gender-related barriers and facilitate sustainable and equitable health outcomes, especially among poor and marginalised populations. Gavi is working with SEWA on the uptake of HPV vaccines in India through dialogue with adolescent girls groups, women's groups and communities.