

UK leads global fight to protect up to 75 million children against deadly diseases

- New UK support to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance to protect up to 75 million children against deadly diseases like measles, polio and typhoid
- By vaccinating millions of children against other deadly diseases, we are supporting the world's poorest countries so they can cope with rising coronavirus cases
- Gavi has so far helped vaccinate more than 760 million children, preventing more than 13 million deaths

The UK today confirmed that it will be the largest supporter of the international alliance to vaccinate children against deadly diseases, saving millions of lives.

Speaking to MPs, International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan announced a funding pledge equivalent of £330 million a year over the next five years to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which will help fund immunisation of 75 million children in the world's poorest countries.

Preventable diseases, like measles, polio and typhoid, still kill hundreds of thousands of people each year. By vaccinating millions of children against other deadly diseases, we are supporting healthcare systems in the world's poorest countries so they can cope with rising coronavirus cases. Health experts have warned that if coronavirus is left to spread in developing countries, this could lead to the virus re-emerging in the UK later in the year and put further pressure on our NHS.

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

“The coronavirus pandemic shows us now more than ever the vital role vaccines play in protecting us all. By supporting Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, we are helping stop the spread of infectious diseases, saving millions of lives and keeping Britain safe.

“As coronavirus vaccine trials begin, we need to make sure any successful vaccine will be available to everyone. Gavi will be integral to achieving this, so we can protect the UK and the NHS from future waves of infection.”

The UK has been a longstanding donor to Gavi since its formation in 2000. With the support of over 25 other countries such as Norway, Italy and the United States, the Vaccine Alliance has since immunised over 760 million children, saving more than 13 million lives.

Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation said:

“When the world beats the COVID-19 pandemic and life returns to normal, Gavi – and the UK's support of it – will be a major reason why. Gavi has spent the

last 20 years delivering vaccines to the world's poorest countries. They've been incredibly effective, and with this new funding, they'll be able to continue their work when a COVID vaccine is ready. Today, the UK is being generous and thinking global, which also happens to be the best way to fight disease."

Today's announcement comes as the UK recently announced that the Global Vaccine Summit on 4 June will go ahead as a virtual summit, hosted by Prime Minister Boris Johnson. It will bring countries together, to follow the UK's lead, in stepping up and funding Gavi's work to save millions of lives and help prevent and address future pandemics.

The UK is leading international efforts to find a coronavirus vaccine, as the largest donor to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)'s coronavirus appeal. Thanks to this investment, future coronavirus vaccines will be made available at the lowest possible price to the NHS.

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Chair of the Gavi Board said:

"Gavi's work has never been more important. Right now it is playing a vital role both keeping immunisation programmes going across the world, reducing the chances of there being further global disease outbreaks, as well as helping developing countries respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As long as there are still pockets of this disease somewhere, everywhere is at risk. This pledge will make a huge difference to these efforts and I'd like to thank the UK, as Gavi's biggest donor since its inception, for their leadership over the past two decades."

Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of Gavi said:

"I'd like to thank the UK public for this pledge: an investment in Gavi is an investment in a safer, healthier world. This funding will not only protect hundreds of millions of children against disease, it will also help health systems to repair and rebuild after the enormous impact of COVID-19 has subsided.

This is our best shield against future pandemics which, as we have seen all too clearly in recent months, do not respect borders. Finally, it means we can continue our work leading international efforts to ensure universal access to a COVID-19 vaccine, as well as to maintain the infrastructure needed to deploy it at scale around the world, which offers our best means of ending this crisis."