

## **LAUNCH OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCE FACILITY FOR IMMUNISATION: ARTICLE BY GORDON BROWN AND GRACA MACHEL**

As the United Nations prepares to meet in special summit to consider world poverty, one fact stands out: one death in every four in today's world is a premature death from avoidable disease. Many are preventable through vaccination.

But until now the speed of scientific advance in vaccination has not been matched by the availability of long term finance to exploit it for the poorest countries. The International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm) being launched by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) / the Vaccine Fund and Europe's Finance Ministers in London today is a great step forward in marrying scientific progress with new long term finance.

Leading private and government donors are stepping up their commitments. With contributions from France, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK and the Gates Foundation over the next ten years \$4 billion will be provided for vaccinations, opening up the possibility of fighting some of the biggest killers in the poorest countries, killers that are already almost a memory in the richest.

The need for these additional resources is clear and urgent. Today nearly 30 million children go unimmunised every year. As a result, illnesses from preventable diseases are a substantial proportion of all illnesses in the poorest countries – nine times the level in the richest countries. More than ten million children die every year from diseases that we know we can prevent or treat through basic health services.

In 2000, with the sponsorship of the Gates Foundation and donor governments, GAVI brought together UNICEF, the World Health Organisation, the World Bank, NGOs and vaccine manufacturers to improve access to new and underused vaccines and speed up the development and introduction of new vaccines in poorer countries.

By the end of last year, GAVI had disbursed over half a billion US dollars in vaccine supplies and on immunisation safety and support services. As a result, an astonishing total of 78 million children have been immunised with new vaccines and more than one million future deaths from children born between 2001 and 2004, in more than 70 countries, have so far been averted by GAVI's work.

By matching the power of medical advance with an innovative facility to front load long term finance, the IFFIm will prevent the deaths of more than five million children from vaccine preventable diseases over the next ten years, through immunization and strengthening of health systems. Millions more additional deaths will be prevented beyond the ten year timeframe of the initiative through the lasting benefits that childhood immunization confers.

For example, the IFFIm will enable GAVI to invest in the introduction of new and underused vaccines, including combination vaccines for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B and the establishment of a post-eradication polio stockpile. It will strengthen also immunisation delivery systems, including support to increase routine immunisation coverage dramatically and conduct mass campaigns to rapidly reduce mortality from measles and tetanus.

It is not just the increased resources the IFFIm generates that makes this possible, but the way in which they are provided. First, it will make additional resources available sooner. By advancing aid now the facility will allow investment to strengthen immunisation systems today - when it is most needed. By tackling killer diseases quicker, IFFIm will allow for two million more lives to be saved than would otherwise have been possible.

Second, by delivering predictable and stable aid, IFFIm provides the certainty manufacturers need to invest in new and under-used vaccines and accelerate the reduction in vaccine prices. This certainty will boost the impact of the new resources – again helping to save more lives. Backing this up is new work led by Italy's Finance Minister Domenico Siniscalco to investigate creative ways of incentivising research to find and produce vaccines, plus an agreement by Kofi Annan to follow this up by hosting a unique conference of world pharmaceutical companies and governments.

So the facility we are launching today can and will save and transform the lives of millions of children, using new and creative approaches of generating resources.

And if the power of this one new mechanism in one area has the potential to save millions of lives, just think what could be achieved by harnessing that power for a larger initiative - not just focused on vaccination, but on health, education, anti-poverty programmes and infrastructure - that offers the potential of meeting not one, but all of the Millennium Development Goals.

Summits disappoint when there is a gap between declarations and delivery. But as the world meets at the UN Summit next week, the IFFIm demonstrates the real potential to bridge the gap between promises and reality, between hopes raised and hopes dashed, between an opportunity seized and opportunity squandered.

Too often in recent months, the world has had to come together to react to a tragedy suffered. Today we see the world coming together to ensure tragedy is averted. And in it we believe we will see the power of human goodness to overcome not only tragedy but millions of avoidable deaths.