



## PHARMACEUTICALS EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL

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### Global Vaccine Drive Facing Acute Crisis

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**Geneva/Washington, May 11, 2010** – Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and Oxfam International published a report today warning that the global approach to providing life-saving vaccines to children in the poorest countries is hampered by high prices and is now facing an acute funding crisis.

The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), which leads international efforts to boost immunization rates in developing countries, has reported considerable success in expanding access to vaccines against Hib and Hepatitis B, two diseases that cause considerable mortality. But the organization is now facing an acute cash crisis due to high prices for new vaccines and stagnating donor resources. Without an additional US\$2.4 billion in donor contributions, GAVI will have to make significant cutbacks that will reduce access to vaccines in poor countries.

Read the report: [Giving Developing Countries the Best Shot](#): An Overview of Vaccine Access and R&D “The report shows that because of the fundamental nature of the vaccine market, it still takes years for expensive new vaccines developed for wealthy countries to reach children across the developing world, and that products emerging from the research pipeline are often insufficiently adapted to developing country needs and conditions,” said Dr. Tido von Schoen-Angerer, director of the MSF Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines.

GAVI’s attempts to speed up the introduction of pneumococcal conjugate vaccines (PCVs) are an illustration of the hurdles faced by the organization. Used for a number of years in wealthy countries, PCVs have prevented hundreds of thousands of cases of pneumonia, meningitis and other serious infections. They have also generated billions of dollars in revenue for multinational drug companies. But the joint efforts of GAVI and donor countries to improve access to these blockbuster products in resource-poor settings have stumbled.

Despite repeated announcements of an impending roll-out of PCVs across developing countries, PCVs will remain out of reach for most children due to problems with supply and a lack of funds. Kenya is the only GAVI-eligible country that will receive the newer version of this life-saving vaccine in 2010, but the cost will be US\$21 per child, an unacceptably high price for donors and developing countries to bear.

“The newest vaccines continue to be produced by only a handful of multinational pharmaceutical companies whose oligopoly status allows them to charge high prices,” said Rohit Malpani, senior policy advisor at Oxfam. “Despite GAVI’s negotiating power, the price of new vaccines is too high. The Best Shot report highlights novel ways of developing affordable vaccines to improve children’s access to them, increasing their chances of survival.”

One example cited by the report is the collaboration between the World Health Organization, PATH, a US-based non-profit, and the Serum Institute of India, which has resulted in a meningitis vaccine that will cost no more than \$0.50 per dose. This vaccine, which is tailored to the needs of countries in the so-called “Meningitis Belt” in sub-Saharan Africa, should be available by the end of the year.

MSF and Oxfam are calling for changing the current system so that donor funds incentivize the development of adapted vaccines and ensure affordable prices.

In addition, the report states that routine immunization programs need to be further expanded. In developing countries, two million children die every year because they cannot access already existing vaccinations. “During the past two years, MSF has responded to major outbreaks of measles and meningitis,” said Dr. von Schoen-Angerer. “This is because an increasing number of children are missing their measles vaccination and because there is not yet a long-duration meningitis vaccine accessible. The overall goal needs to be to increase rates of routine immunization and to ensure access to newer vaccines.”

In 2009, MSF treated more than 50,000 cases and vaccinated more than 7.4 million people against meningitis. In 2008, the organization treated more than 32,000 measles cases and vaccinated more than 1.9 million children in response to measles outbreaks.