



Foreword

The Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP) is a framework approved by the World Health Assembly in May 2012 to achieve the Decade of Vaccines vision by delivering universal access to immunization. The mission outlined in the GVAP is straightforward: improve health by extending by 2020 and beyond the full benefits of immunization to all people, regardless of where they are born, who they are or where they live.

Overwhelming evidence demonstrates the benefits of immunization as one of the most successful and cost-effective health interventions known. Over the past several decades, immunization has achieved many things, including the eradication of smallpox, an accomplishment that has been called one of humanity's greatest triumphs. Vaccines have saved countless lives, lowered the global incidence of polio by 99 percent and reduced illness, disability and death from diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles, *Haemophilus influenzae* type b disease, and epidemic meningococcal A meningitis. Further progress has been made in introducing vaccines against pneumococcal disease and rotavirus diarrhoea as well as vaccines which prevent chronic diseases such as liver and cervical cancer.

We are facing a pivotal moment in history. Right now, the global health community has an unprecedented opportunity to coordinate with governments to develop and implement plans and strategies that will improve the lives of millions of people around the world through universal access to appropriate vaccines.

Together, we can overcome the hurdles that remain in delivering vaccines to every corner of the planet. These powerful tools are already available to most, but not yet all, people. To extend immunization to everyone, the GVAP seeks to ensure adequate resources, develop supportive health systems and infrastructure, and work with countries to train health workers needed to reach remote and marginalized populations. The plan also articulates the need for a concerted effort to develop new and improved vaccines and technologies that will help maximize the benefits of immunization around the world for years to come.

This ambitious action plan to reach all people with the vaccines they need is the product of the Decade of Vaccines Collaboration, an unprecedented effort that brought together development, health and immunization experts and stakeholders.

The powerful idea that vaccines work and save lives must now be shared with a much broader audience, using

such vehicles as World Immunization Week and others to promote universal vaccination and help focus on current challenges related to immunization. While dedicated health workers immunize people daily in all countries, World Immunization Week gives countries and organizations additional, focused opportunities to raise public awareness of how immunization saves lives – during the same week, every year, in every country.

When they endorsed the GVAP, health officials of 194 countries also declared that the completion of polio eradication is a programmatic emergency for global health, asking for sufficient funding to complete the initiative. Polio eradication is an early, major milestone in the implementation of the GVAP.

Our aim is to build on past achievements and use our know-how and experience to save more lives. This plan, that builds on the WHO–UNICEF Global Immunization Vision and Strategy, and the GAVI Alliance Strategy, provides the guiding principles and strategic objectives that will enable immunization of more people against more diseases; introduce newly available life-saving vaccines and technologies; and coordinate immunization and other critical health interventions. The plan also suggests key targets for further research and development.

The Decade of Vaccines Leadership Council, along with all partners – governments and elected officials, health professionals, academia, manufacturers, global agencies, development partners, civil society, media and the private sector – are committed to achieving the ambitious goals of the GVAP. Together we will track and measure progress through the GVAP and the UN Secretary General Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health Accountability Frameworks.

Many more are expected to add their support in the future as the plan is translated and implemented at the country and regional levels. The success of this ambitious global plan will be one of the most enduring legacies for today's children and the generations who follow them.

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