

The following paper provides the GAVI Board with an update on the objectives and progress to date of the Immunization Financing Database. It also presents provisional conclusions relevant to policy that can be drawn on the basis of current information.

The Board is asked to endorse continued work on this project.

Immunization Financing Database UPDATE

Background: The GAVI Financing Task Force (FTF) is responsible for increasing the understanding of the reasons behind inadequate funding for vaccines and immunization services in the poorest countries and identifying strategies to improve the capacity of governments and external donors to finance these needs.

To help fulfil its role, the FTF has recognized the importance of developing a comprehensive database on immunization spending and financing. Such a database would yield new insights about donor and government financing patterns for immunization and strategies for long-term financial sustainability. By providing baseline and trends on immunization spending and financial flows, it will contribute to the long-term evaluation of the influence of GAVI and the Vaccine Fund on immunization financing at the national, regional and global levels. Moreover, the immunization financing database will help address policy and programmatic concerns such as assessing the relationship between funding patterns and programme performance and efficiency, and assist in the provision of guidance to countries on how to most effectively use additional financial support for immunization.

Development: In November 2001 and under the auspices of the GAVI Financing Task Force, a team of technical experts from World Bank, USAID (Abt Associates), CVP (Abt Associates), UNICEF, WHO and PAHO was brought together to develop the immunization financing database. To date, initial work has consisted of collecting and assessing the quality of existing data, developing tools and methods to strengthen future data collection, and designing the basic database structure for a publicly available database on immunization expenditures and financing.

Challenge: The key challenge of this work has been to address the comparability and quality of the existing data from the wide variety of data sources available. Over the past two years, the GAVI and Vaccine Fund application process has been seen as an unprecedented opportunity to collect consistent and comparable baseline country level information on immunization financing and expenditures. Although baseline expenditure and financing estimates are now available for 58 countries, it has been difficult to evaluate their accuracy and reliability. The baseline estimates are often incomplete and inconsistent in methodologies or when compared to other sources of information (such as a recent in-depth costing study). The reliability of the information provided by countries through the GAVI and Vaccine Fund application process is weak as a result.

Lessons Learned: The shortcomings in the country-provided information is the combined result of a clear lack of capacity to report financial information at both the national and regional levels, and the lack of any clear guidance and support to countries to report

consistent, comparable and high quality data. Looking into the future, it will be important that the review process for countries' Financial Sustainability Plans gives due attention to assessing and providing feedback to countries on the completeness and accuracy of the financial information provided.

Key Findings: Existing country-reported information, although imperfect, does however convey several clear messages:

1. Vaccine Fund contributions represent a substantial share of total routine immunization expenditures in many countries and the introduction of new vaccines will represent a financial challenge for many countries, especially countries that introduce the pentavalent vaccine.
2. There is considerable variation in the basic cost structure and levels of spending across countries – even countries of similar income and coverage levels. This implies the need to better understand the sources of this variation for future analyses from the Financial Sustainability Plans.
3. The data clearly demonstrate substantial year-to-year variability in the levels of financial resources available to the national immunization program, suggesting that multi-year funding commitments could be useful to reduce volatility and to advance the aim of long-term sustainability.
4. Finally, early and still tentative results seem to suggest that GAVI and the Vaccine Fund are not displacing existing resources from immunization, although better quality data in the future will ascertain the validity of these findings.

Next Steps: In light of the clear data comparability and quality issues that the database development group has identified and systematically analysed, the FTF has placed its emphasis on ensuring the success of the second opportunity to collect high quality information on immunization expenditures and financing through the GAVI Financial Sustainability Plans. Efforts have been made to strengthen both national and regional capacities to report this information through the development of standardized methodologies, guidelines and tools, and to strengthen the capacity of countries to better report this information through existing data collection mechanism such as the UNICEF-WHO Joint Reporting form.

Conclusion: In summary, by taking the fullest (yet appropriately cautious) advantage of existing country-reported data, and by making every effort to strengthen reporting of financial information in the near future through the Financial Sustainability Plan process, the database is compiling extremely useful information that has not been previously available to countries and global and regional partners. The database effort – the result of the combined work of GAVI's partners – represents one more “global public good” under the Alliance's auspices.

