

Mid-term Review of Gavi's Civil Society and Community Engagement Strategy: Executive Summary

Civil society organisations (CSOs) and community-based actors play an essential role in helping to achieve the ambitious objectives of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. In recognition of both the value of CSOs and the challenges they face (as outlined, together with key recommendations, in a 2019 evaluation), Gavi has worked to improve its methods of engagement and to optimise processes and procedures to better address CSO needs. This has occurred most notably through the development of the Civil Society and Community Engagement (CSCE) strategy, co-created through an 18-month consultative process in partnership with civil society.

In December 2021, the Gavi Board approved the CSCE strategy, which includes a new requirement for all countries to allocate at least 10% of their combined funding ceilings – Health Systems Strengthening (HSS), Equity Accelerator Funding (EAF) and Targeted Country Assistance (TCA) – for CSO implementation as they submit new Full Portfolio Planning (FPP)¹ applications, unless they can provide a robust rationale as to why this is not appropriate in their context. Since then, the Gavi Secretariat – in collaboration with the Gavi CSO Constituency through its CSO Steering Committee – has embarked on a journey to translate this decision and strategy into action through two monitoring frameworks: the CSCE Strategic Approach and the CSCE Strategic Initiative.

At the request of the Gavi CSO Steering Committee and its CSCE Working Group, the consulting firm Kati Collective completed a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the CSCE strategy through a participatory evaluation, guided by collaborative consultation with key stakeholders² throughout the process. The three main objectives of this MTR are to: 1) measure the progress of CSO engagement in Gavi's 5.0 strategic period (2021-2025), as defined by the CSCE strategy, 2) use findings to inform the Gavi Alliance more broadly about how CSOs impact its work and help contribute to its goals and 3) offer key recommendations for Gavi's 6.0 strategic period (2026-2030) to engage CSOs and communities.

The MTR took place from July 2024 to November 2024 and consisted of three major processes:

1. Interviewing **33 key informants** and reviewing **23 documents** to diagnose the main strengths and challenges of the CSCE implementation process.
2. **Codifying and triangulating** these findings through **quantitative analysis, and qualitative analysis** based on Gavi Secretariat internal data.
3. Iteratively refining emerging themes and findings and co-constructing actionable recommendations to address the identified issues through a series of **six consultations with over 85 total unique participants** (many participants participated in several), representing all key stakeholder groups.

Key Findings and Recommendations

In this Executive Summary, the main findings of the CSCE MTR are grouped into three key focus areas: 1) Gavi Secretariat and Alliance, 2) CSO Host, Constituency and Steering Committee, and 3)

¹ Full Portfolio Planning is the planning process that a country undertakes to map out its Theory of Change for Gavi support, including its goals, objectives, activities and accompanying request for financing.

² Key stakeholders include the Gavi Secretariat, Gavi Alliance members / Core Partners, the CSO Constituency, the CSO Steering Committee, the CSCE Working Group, CSOs outside the Constituency, Gavi staff based at the country level and Fund Managers.

Country Level, with a high-level summary of key strengths and challenges provided for each. To address the findings, the review makes eight key recommendations under two overarching themes for Gavi's strategy to engage civil society and communities in its 6.0 strategic period (2026-2030).

1 The Gavi Secretariat and Alliance

Engaging CSOs at scale in a meaningful way has required co-creating new ways of working within the Gavi Secretariat's core operating model. While the Alliance is still on this journey, considerable progress has been achieved in the past two years, with a clear acceleration in the second half of 2024. The CSCE strategy has triggered a comprehensive culture shift: the Alliance has transformed its approach to CSO engagement, moving from viewing CSOs as an isolated partner to integrating them more fully into country-level implementation and providing more opportunities for CSOs to engage at the global level. The CSCE strategy is driving a change in how Gavi funds and supports CSOs, tangibly strengthening the enabling environment for CSOs to contribute to immunisation programmes.

Key challenges thus far are related to a variety of factors, including the fragmented operationalisation of how CSOs engage with Gavi at the Secretariat level and across the Alliance; this has resulted in uneven co-ordination and engagement of CSOs at the country level. Additionally, inconsistent and weak monitoring systems, as well as poor communication and visibility of CSO work, have rendered it difficult to point to clear examples of impact as a result of the CSCE strategy. Finally, the majority of funding via the CSCE strategy is still going mainly to global CSOs or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) through the direct contracting channels of the Gavi Secretariat, further straining its limited bandwidth.

Strengths³

1. **The Alliance has implemented the Board mandate⁴ as envisioned**, with most countries adhering to the 10% target, making available more than **US\$200 million** for CSOs across relevant funding levers, resulting in a ripple effect on broader funding for CSOs across additional funding levers.

Over 80% of countries that have gone through their FPP processes have adhered to the Board mandate of a 10% allocation. The Board mandate has **triggered a shift in funding** available to CSOs across all Gavi funding levers, beyond those included in the mandate.

2. **Contextually relevant, tailored and targeted funding modalities have been developed and utilised.**

Funds are being effectively channeled to CSOs via a range of modalities – either directly from the Gavi Secretariat, through governments / programme management units (PMUs), or via Core Partners, or indirectly through a Fund Manager – to **ensure that prioritised funding reaches the right CSOs for the right country context.**

Establishment of this “menu of CSO funding mechanisms” has **accelerated the translation of allocations to contracts**, as some of the burden placed on the Gavi Secretariat to directly fund CSOs is being alleviated by additional and more efficient channels.

³ This section includes reported funding data only and acknowledges that there are additional but unavailable data from indirect funding sources that are not reflected here.

⁴ In December 2021, the Gavi Board approved the CSCE strategy, including a new requirement for all countries to allocate at least 10% of their combined funding ceilings (HSS, EAF, TCA) for CSO implementation as they submit new FPP applications, unless they can provide a robust rationale as to why this is not appropriate in their context.

3. **The Fund Manager mechanism, despite being operational for only a year, has expanded and adapted Gavi’s operating model** to be able to engage a more diverse set of CSOs (in particular, local CSOs) more effectively.

The Fund Manager mechanism channels the majority of funds to local-level CSOs. Almost 90% of funds go to local CSOs through indirect funding channels⁵ (such as the Fund Manager mechanism, Core Partners, governments), compared to just 31% when through Gavi directly.

In just one year, from 2023 to 2024, the Fund Manager mechanism (Q2 2023):



In Ethiopia and Pakistan, the time from release of the request for proposals (RFP) to funding being allocated to CSOs was just **four months**.

4. **The humanitarian response has been strengthened**, with innovative management and partnerships boosting Gavi’s support to CSOs in fragile and conflict (F/C) and humanitarian contexts.

Among the countries considered to be fragile by Gavi, **143 health CSOs** have received Gavi support for immunisation programming.

The CSCE strategy is leveraging an **international NGO engagement mechanism** (a framework agreement at the global level with country-specific calls for proposals) to effectively and rapidly channel disbursements in humanitarian and F/C contexts.

Challenges

1. **The design of the CSCE strategy is complex**, with an overly theoretical and detailed theory of change (see Appendix 1). Unclear framing of the Strategic Approach versus the Strategic Initiative limits understanding and buy-in of the overall strategy. Additionally, effective communication of the CSCE strategy across partners and stakeholders has been limited.
2. **Operationalisation of the CSCE strategy has been fragmented due to poor co-ordination at the Secretariat level and across the Alliance**, including expectations, roles and responsibilities of Core Partners. This fragmented set-up for CSO work causes confusion at the country level. For example, there is a lack of organisation among different Gavi Secretariat teams that work with CSOs, each with their own projects that pull country teams and EPI (Expanded Programme on Immunization) managers in on CSO engagement, including for many small grants. This can result in cases where the same partner is accessing Gavi funding from three different financial instruments.

⁵ Indirect funding modalities for CSOs are all other channels other than directly via the Gavi Secretariat. These include Fund Managers, Core Partners, international NGOs and governments / PMUs.

The CSCE strategy is plagued by inconsistent and weak monitoring systems and poor communication and visibility of CSOs' impact. Challenges related to data collection across funding mechanisms, partners and teams have resulted in barriers in aggregating and understanding the outcomes and impact of the CSCE strategy and have stalled communication of the impacts and results of CSO work as well as opportunities to learn from this work.

- 3. The flow of funds is sub-optimal.** The use of available funding mechanisms is not yet fully optimised, with the majority of funding going to international CSOs (NGOs) through direct contracting channels, further straining the limited bandwidth of the Gavi Secretariat. Efforts to improve this are under way via the Fund Manager mechanism but should be scaled up substantially.

2 CSO Host, Constituency, and Steering Committee

A CSO Constituency – convened and engaged with by the Gavi Secretariat and the CSO Steering Committee – exists but is limited. It lacks transparency, clarity and two-way engagement, which limits its potential impact to support and leverage a diverse range of CSO voices, skills and perspectives. Three civil society representatives actively participate on the Gavi Board, on the Programme and Policy Committee (PPC) and on the Alliance Partnership Performance Team (APPT); however, representation does not reflect the diversity of civil society that Gavi seeks to engage via the CSCE strategy. Efforts are under way to make necessary shifts to address some of these challenges, such as the development of a listserv for two-way engagement with the CSO Constituency, and opening up opportunities to bring forward broader Constituency voices (experts on key topics or issues) to engage with the Gavi Secretariat.

Strengths

- 1. An improved, collaborative relationship exists between the Gavi Secretariat and the CSO Steering Committee.** This has fostered co-creation, joint responsibility and accountability in the CSCE process. For example, two teams from the Gavi Secretariat – Country Program Delivery (CPD) and Public Policy Engagement (PPE) – routinely participate in the monthly calls of both the CSO Steering Committee and the CSCE Working Group, where key challenges and opportunities are discussed and explored collaboratively. These routine, formalised fora have helped improve the overall relationships between the Gavi Secretariat and CSOs and have moved the needle on implementing the CSCE strategy.
- 2. CSOs have gained attention at the global level as their voice and influence are increasingly heeded and acted on.** This has included seats for CSOs on the Gavi Board, PPC, and APPT as well as broader representation in key global gatherings such as strategy meetings at the Lusaka Agenda meeting in Ethiopia (2023), global networks and working groups (SAGE, IAD2030), panels at Invest Opportunity in Paris (2023), and key consultations including the Togo Alliance Partner workshop, the HSIS 6.0 strategy, the EPI@50 campaign, the Funding Policy Review and the HSS Policy Review.
- 3. There is agreement on the key barriers to full engagement and representation of the CSO Constituency, and efforts to course-correct are under way.** The CSO Steering Committee and the CSCE Working Group have documented key barriers to fully engaging with the CSO Constituency and have developed and implemented solutions to address some of these. For example, there is now a listserv to engage Constituency members in two-way communication, as well as monthly calls on key subjects of interest, meant to facilitate

collaboration, learning and community building. Additionally, the Steering Committee is opening up opportunities for the broader constituency to work with Gavi on key subject matter areas that extend beyond the Steering Committee's areas of expertise.

4. **A new modality is being piloted whereby a vibrant representation of CSOs is increasingly present from the onset of the Full Portfolio Planning (FPP) process.** In the pilot countries of Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Uganda, members of the Steering Committee have worked to ensure that CSOs are present, prepared and heard at key moments in the FPP process at the country level. For example, in-country CSO focal points have advocated for CSOs to be active in all thematic groups during the FPP process – rather than narrowly pigeon-holed into demand generation – supporting them to showcase the broad range of their contributions across all thematic areas.

Challenges

1. **Mapping and engagement of the CSO Constituency has faced delays.** The facilitation of two-way engagement with and full mapping of the Constituency by the Host was significantly delayed up until the second quarter of 2024. This has led to limited and low exchange with CSO Constituency members and to a lack of a clear understanding (until recently) of who makes up the Constituency. The result is that, in lieu of a more robust CSO database, there is a limited email list. This list lacks key characteristics of CSOs in the context of the CSCE strategy: For example, what thematic areas does their work focus on? What communities do they serve? Which age groups do they target? Without a full picture of the CSO Constituency members and their capacities, it is difficult for the Gavi Secretariat and the CSO Steering Committee to fully engage with the Constituency.
2. **Constituency roles are unclear.** Communication, in particular externally, regarding the Constituency's purpose, members, and organisation has been unclear, leading to insufficient leverage, especially at the country level.
3. **Political will and standardisation are lacking.** There is insufficient political will to strengthen country-level CSO platforms, along with the absence of a standardised modality for CSOs to engage in Gavi processes and to ensure proper representation at the country level.
4. **The Steering Committee cannot fully encompass the broad range of expertise, experience and connections to support Gavi on all needs and requests.** The 18 members of the Steering Committee reflect diversity on a geographic and technical basis, etc., but it is impossible that a group this size can encapsulate all that civil society broadly has to offer Gavi. This limits the overall voice and representation of CSOs within the Alliance context.

3 Country Level

The CSCE strategy has unlocked significant funding for CSOs – including local-level CSOs – to support national immunisation efforts, particularly in high-impact and fragile and conflict (F/C) country segments where implementation of the strategy is most evident. Challenges related to the lack of in-country co-ordination and targeted support for the CSCE strategy have diluted the potential impact of these investments by diverting budgets away from the CSCE core pillars (advocacy, service delivery, demand generation). This has limited the diversity and overall fit of CSOs contracted for the work and has impeded visibility into CSO contributions.

Strengths

1. CSOs are having an impact via the three core pillars of work (as envisioned by the Strategic Approach):

Advocacy



Ghana

The CSO *Hope for Future Generations* has led advocacy for PHC and Immunisation Financing, influencing a **44% increase** in public spending on immunisation from 2023 to 2024.



Kenya

Advocacy efforts of the *Health NGOs Network (HENNET)* prompted the Ministry of Health to address vaccine shortages through redistribution of vaccines and the urgent disbursement of an **\$8.6 million allocation**, ensuring the continued immunisation of vulnerable populations.



Madagascar

The CSO *HINA Platforme* worked with 94 municipal decision makers committed to increasing local funding for immunisation in eight regions. In the end, the government paid **100%** of the commitments, equivalent to **\$1.68 million**. Government co-financing commitments increased 19% in 2024 compared to 2023.

Service Delivery, Demand Generation / Community Engagement



DRC

SANRU partners

115,621 zero-dose children vaccinated⁶
(77% of the 150,715 identified)
149,286 under-immunised children vaccinated
(73% of the 204,659 identified) between Jan-Aug. 2024.



Mali

IFRC and Mali Red Cross

18,418 zero-dose children identified
16,714 zero-dose children vaccinated



Sudan

Save the Children

22,650 zero-dose children vaccinated
31,000 under-immunised children vaccinated



Nigeria

Vaccine Network for Disease Control (VNCD)

31,334 zero-dose children identified and vaccinated

⁶ Zero-dose children are those that have not received any routine vaccines. See <https://www.gavi.org/vaccineswork/zero-dose-child-explained>.

2. **Increased funding for CSOs is being translated into contracts in the majority of the 57 countries eligible for Gavi support.** There has been a sea change in funding availability for CSOs to support national immunisation efforts, which is resulting in the contracting of CSOs in the majority of Gavi countries.
 - CSOs have been contracted in **86%** of the 57 Gavi-eligible countries.
 - **\$271 million** has been contracted to CSOs in the Gavi 5.0/5.1 strategic period (\$409 million allocated)⁷.
 - **225** CSOs have been contracted to date in the Gavi 5.0/5.1 strategic period.
3. **Partnerships with civil society are increasingly diversified.** The CSCE strategy has resulted in significant diversification of CSO partners, with a focus on engaging local organisations and zero-dose children / missed communities.
 - In **60%** of Gavi's 57 countries, **local CSOs** have been contracted.
 - **\$106 million** was contracted to **local CSOs** in Gavi's 5.0/5.1 strategic period (\$203 million allocated)⁸.
 - **196 local CSOs** have been contracted to date in Gavi's 5.0/5.1 strategic period.
 - In **79%** of Gavi's 57 countries, CSOs have been contracted to contribute to zero-dose and missed community efforts.
 - In **56%** of Gavi's 57 countries, CSOs have been contracted to provide support in hard-to-reach areas.
4. **Effective implementation of the CSCE strategy has occurred at the segment level.** Successful implementation has been most evident in high-impact countries and in fragile and conflict (F/C) countries, with a staggered approach facilitating learning and refinement of support for CSO programming in these contexts.

Challenges

1. **Misalignment of resources is occurring.** Plans and budgets are being diverted from the CSCE strategy's core pillars (advocacy, service delivery, demand generation), underutilising the potential of CSOs in these key areas, particularly in service delivery. This often results when budgets are not spent-out on time and CSOs and the Gavi Secretariat are left out of the decision making on where to allocate remaining resources.
2. **There has been inadequate recruitment and engagement of the "right" CSOs to do the work.** The CSOs selected are not always the best fit for the work, and key groups such as faith-based organisations and youth networks are not strategically engaged. This is often related to key decision makers at the country level recruiting well-known, larger international NGOs – which are perceived to be a safer, easier bet with less risk – rather than expanding opportunities to well-suited but lesser-known local and/or smaller organisations.
3. **Co-ordination and visibility are lacking.** The roles of CSOs in core countries are not sufficiently contextualised – especially in transitioning countries – and their contributions to routine campaigns are not visible.

⁷ The CSCE strategy is being rolled out sequentially and strategically at the country level, depending on where each country is in its funding cycle; this means that implementation remains in its early stages, particularly for those countries recently completing Full Portfolio Planning (FPP). This explains the gap between funds allocated and contracting of CSOs.

⁸ See previous footnote.

4. **Key country-level stakeholders lack bandwidth and are often not fully on board with meaningfully engaging CSOs.** Gavi Senior Country Managers have a wide variance in how they engage with CSOs, due in part to bandwidth issues and to working with governments and other stakeholders that lack interest in meaningfully engaging CSOs in the planning and implementation of Gavi work.

4 Recommendations for the Gavi 6.0 strategic period (2026-2030)

The findings of the Mid-Term Review yield clear recommendations for strategic shifts that need to happen at the global and country level for the Alliance to better support CSOs and communities to contribute to the 6.0 strategic goals.

Two overarching themes provide the framework for the Gavi 6.0 strategy:

1. Promote a cultural shift across the Alliance to recognise CSOs as an integral part of a resilient health system critical to helping Gavi achieve its goals.
2. Maintain momentum and continue the investments in the Gavi 5.0 CSCE strategy into the 6.0 period, while simplifying the strategy for clarity of vision across the Alliance.

Eight strategic recommendations underpin these two themes...

...for the Alliance to support – and for the Secretariat and CSO Steering Committee to consider – when developing strategies for and implementing the Gavi 6.0 strategy. The level of detail for each recommendation varies, given the input provided by various stakeholders and the robustness of related findings from the Mid-Term Review.

1 Establish organised co-ordination & representation mechanisms for CSOs to engage in Gavi processes at the country level.

Map existing structures and mechanisms, identify gaps and determine attributes that the country-level representation mechanism should have, and establish contextually relevant co-ordination platforms at the national level.

→ *Fundamental to achieving Gavi's objectives through more co-ordinated CSO engagement.*

2 Understand and amplify the contributions and impact of CSOs, and facilitate shared learning and good practices with improved monitoring, evaluation and learning, intentional documentation and cross-country knowledge sharing.

Implement clear and standardised monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track and measure outcomes and impact across the CSCE strategy in Gavi's 6.0 strategic period. Enact requirements for standardised data collection across all CSO funding mechanisms and contracts.

Increase communication, including by documenting and sharing success stories to showcase the work being done by CSOs and communities.

Facilitate learning across and among key stakeholders.

→ *Imperative to the ongoing allocation of resources to CSOs to comprehensively understand and showcase the contribution of CSOs and communities in achieving Gavi's 6.0 goals.*

3 **Ensure that the CSO Hosting Facility and the CSO Steering Committee provide more effective support to the CSO Constituency.**

Improve visibility, engagement, representation, capacity building, and facilitation of learning and accountability mechanisms.

→ *Highly critical to promote engagement, accountability and capacity for diverse CSO involvement in Gavi's work.*

4 **Tailor and target support to key contexts and types of CSOs and communities that require intentional strategies.**

Develop institutional strategies for, and strengthen engagement with, communities, community-led organisations, faith-based organisations, youth-based organisations and women's organisations in immunisation programmes.

Optimise the engagement approach in fragile and conflict (F/C) and humanitarian settings (and explore extending engagement to countries with protracted armed conflict), for example through a higher risk appetite, greater agility and flexibility of support, and working within the existing significant humanitarian architecture.

→ *Highly critical to enable more effective support and engagement with communities, including a more diverse range of local CSOs and civil society and communities in F/C and humanitarian settings.*

5 **Apply earmarking of funds for CSOs across all of Gavi's relevant funding levers where CSOs have the potential to contribute to national immunisation goals, to enable better tracking, engagement and measurable impact.**

Ensure that the 10% funding allocation is protected and maintained, used effectively and simplified.

Emphasise the importance of this funding in supporting local CSOs and enhancing health outcomes.

Clarify which funding levers, as well as how much and where funding comes from.

→ *Highly critical, as it is an enabler/driver of the overall CSCE strategy in Gavi 6.0.*

6 **Foster more equitable and sustainable CSO engagement by supporting local entities to bring their expertise, capacities and leadership to the fore.**

Sensitise the definition of "local" across Gavi.

Promote a collaborative understanding among CSOs to combat the perception of competition, and focus on collective goals.

Empower and engage local entities that have been left out of Gavi's work.

→ *Imperative to equitably and fully engage local CSOs and communities in planning, implementation and oversight of immunisation.*

7 Further streamline and refine options that enable access to funding for CSOs (especially local CSOs), and favour the availability of indirect funding channels.

Develop specific targets related to the following attributes, and require that any indirect funding channels adhere to:

- Competitive and transparent selection processes
- Targeting a diverse set of partners, with a focus on local CSOs
- Engagement with local CSOs embedded within the community
- Strengthening Gavi's sub-national focus
- Including on-the-job capacity strengthening mechanisms
- Developing risk, financial and reputational assurance
- Amplifying visibility/communication on CSO work
- Streamlining the ability to ensure focus on, assess, and report results, outcomes and impact
- Timely disbursement of funds.

→ *Having timely, effective, accessible funding mechanisms for CSOs, in particular local CSOs, is imperative to achieving effective CSO engagement.*

8 Streamline the CSO engagement and management structure at the Alliance and Secretariat levels to improve co-ordination of CSO activities at the country level.

Enhance co-ordination and efficiency within the Secretariat as Gavi aims to meaningfully engage CSOs to achieve Gavi's mission. Share the visibility of Gavi's engagement with CSOs across various teams through Gavi's governance mechanisms, within global forums and at the country level.

Promote collaboration among all key stakeholders to better inform the design of Gavi investments towards CSOs and to amplify their diverse role in supporting immunisation more broadly. There is a need for a more robust, systematic and transparent engagement that takes place jointly with the CSO Constituency, the Gavi Secretariat and relevant representatives of Alliance partners.

→ *Fundamental to achieving Gavi's objectives through more co-ordinated CSO engagement.*