



Gavi CSO Constituency

Helping Reach Every Child

Financing the Future – Securing Immunization Coverage in Africa

The high-level webinar “*Financing the Future: Securing Immunization Coverage in Africa*” served as a crucial platform for addressing the ongoing challenges of immunization financing in Africa. Amid the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and an alarming rise in zero-dose children, the session gathered key stakeholders to explore innovative solutions and strategic approaches for achieving long-term, sustainable immunization funding. The attendees, comprising representatives from civil society, governments, donors, and development partners, shared a unified commitment to ensuring equitable vaccine access for every child in Africa.

Moderated by **Bvudzai Priscilla Magadzire**, Director of Partnerships at VillageReach and Civil Society Constituency representative on the Gavi Board, the session used tools like Mentimeter surveys and active chat participation to encourage engagement and interaction. This dynamic exchange allowed participants to voice their opinions and offer valuable insights into the region’s immunization financing landscape.

Speaker Contributions

In her opening remarks, **Rachel Ndirangu** of PATH opened the webinar by stressing the urgency of addressing Africa’s immunization gaps. With over 111 million children missing vaccinations in 2023, Rachel underscored that these are not merely statistics, but children left vulnerable to preventable diseases. She highlighted the necessity for innovative financing strategies that emphasize long-term sustainability, accountability, and efficient use of resources. Her call for action resonated throughout the session, urging all stakeholders to focus on mobilizing resources to secure the future of immunization in Africa.

The discussion unfolded with rich contributions from various speakers, each offering unique perspectives and solutions.

Dr. Mike Mulongo, representing PATH, presented findings from a retrospective study on immunization financing across ten African countries. His analysis revealed systemic challenges that constrain fiscal space for health investments, such as high debt levels and insufficient tax revenues. Only Mozambique among the studied countries mobilized tax revenues exceeding the recommended 15% of GDP, and none met the \$86 per capita spending threshold required for Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

Dr. Mulongo emphasized that immunization financing cannot be viewed in isolation but must be understood within the broader economic context. He identified high dependency on external funding as a significant risk to sustainability, with countries like South Sudan relying on donor contributions for 89% of their health financing. Meanwhile, Nigeria's reliance on out-of-pocket health spending—at 75%—leaves families vulnerable to catastrophic financial hardship.

As a way forward, Dr. Mulongo proposed reforms in public financial management to improve taxation systems and address debt inefficiencies. He also called for strengthened health systems to ensure equitable vaccine access and advocated for targeted investments in domestic vaccine manufacturing to reduce reliance on external supply chains.

Building on this, **Dr. William Menson**, Senior Manager for Immunization Financing and Sustainability at Gavi, highlighted the achievements of Gavi's co-financing model. He noted that African countries contributed \$103 million towards co-financing vaccines in 2024, marking the highest nominal contribution to date. This milestone reflects growing ownership of immunization programs by African governments, a critical step toward sustainability.

Dr. Menson introduced Gavi's upcoming 6.0 strategy, which focuses on sustainability through several key shifts. One notable change includes increasing the eligibility threshold to allow countries with a gross national income (GNI) per capita of up to \$2,300 to remain eligible for support. Additionally, Gavi plans to provide multi-year waivers for fragile states, ensuring continuity of immunization services during periods of instability.

He also shared an inspiring example of direct facility financing (DFF) from Nigeria's Taraba district. By enabling faster disbursement of funds and empowering frontline health workers, the DFF model significantly improved outreach and vaccination rates. Dr. Menson urged stakeholders to advocate

for increased domestic resource mobilization and align with Gavi's replenishment goals to secure the future of immunization funding.

From Uganda, **Jimmy Amini**, representing the Ministry of Health, provided insights into the country's experience with immunization financing. Uganda has achieved remarkable progress, increasing co-financing obligations from \$2.6 million in 2021 to \$8.1 million in 2024. This growth reflects the government's commitment to sustaining immunization programs despite fiscal constraints.

Jimmy highlighted the country's best practices, including leveraging strong political will, engaging key stakeholders through evidence-based advocacy, and ensuring transparency in resource utilization. However, he also acknowledged significant challenges. Epidemic responses, such as those required for Ebola and Mpox outbreaks, strain resources and complicate routine immunization efforts. Cross-border health risks, particularly from neighboring fragile states, and vaccine hesitancy driven by misinformation further threaten immunization coverage. Jimmy called for greater investments in surveillance systems, community engagement, and diagnostic capacities to address these issues effectively.

Emily Chirwa, Deputy Director of Planning and Policy at Malawi's Ministry of Health, offered a candid overview of her country's immunization financing landscape. Despite significant challenges, including reliance on donors for 70% of immunization funding, Malawi has maintained an impressive immunization rate of 90%.

Emily presented several innovative strategies to increase domestic financing. One proposal involved introducing earmarked taxes on commodities like sugar to generate additional revenue for health programs. She also advocated for integrating health services to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Her presentation underscored the importance of advocacy and stakeholder engagement. Malawi successfully conducted the Africa Leadership Meeting on Health Financing, which brought together government ministries, civil society, and private sector representatives to prioritize immunization funding. Emily called for continued collaboration and learning from regional best practices, such as direct facility financing models.

Audience Feedback and Insights via Mentimeter

The interactive Mentimeter surveys provided participants an opportunity to share their thoughts on two key questions:

1. How has shrinking fiscal space impacted immunization efforts in your country?

- Many participants highlighted challenges such as reduced coverage, increased zero-dose children, and rising dependency on donor funding.
- Some countries also pointed out the need to better prioritize immunization in national budgets.

2. What strategies can mitigate funding reductions for immunization?

- There was strong consensus on the need for increased domestic financing, with many suggesting earmarked taxes or direct facility financing as practical solutions.
- Evidence-based advocacy to engage donors, and community-driven initiatives to reduce costs and improve service delivery, were also frequently mentioned.

Emerging Themes and Key Takeaways

1. Challenges in Sustainability:

- Heavy reliance on external donors, high debt burdens, and limited fiscal space remain significant threats to the sustainability of immunization programs.
- Shrinking fiscal spaces and inequities in immunization coverage persist, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected regions.

2. Innovative Solutions:

- Strengthening domestic resource mobilization through tax reforms and public financial management improvements is critical to reducing dependency on external funding.

- Integrating immunization with broader health services, expanding health system capacity, and exploring innovative funding mechanisms (e.g., earmarked taxes on specific commodities) can help bridge funding gaps.

3. Importance of Accountability and Transparency:

- Efficient and transparent use of funds is paramount for building trust among stakeholders and ensuring resources reach the communities that need them most.
- Strengthened monitoring frameworks and community oversight will ensure that resources are used effectively.

4. Regional Collaboration:

- Cross-country collaboration, sharing best practices, and learning from successful models like Uganda's political engagement and Nigeria's DFF initiative are essential for improving immunization outcomes across Africa.

Recommendations

The following actionable recommendations were developed based on the discussions and insights shared during the webinar:

1. **Strengthen Domestic Financing:**
Governments must prioritize increased budget allocations for immunization, focusing on domestic funding over donor dependency. This includes exploring innovative revenue streams, such as earmarked taxes on products like sugar or alcohol and expanding voluntary health insurance schemes.
2. **Enhance Public Financial Management:**
Reforms are necessary to improve the efficiency of tax collection and address debt burdens. Developing systems for timely disbursement of funds to health facilities will improve the responsiveness of immunization programs.
3. **Invest in Health System Resilience:**
Expanding cold chain infrastructure, improving vaccine storage and transportation, and

strengthening disease surveillance systems are essential for enhancing vaccine delivery and addressing public health emergencies like epidemics and cross-border health risks.

4. **Foster Public-Private Partnerships:**

Private sector engagement is crucial for supplementing resources and expertise. Governments should work closely with private companies to leverage corporate social responsibility and business investments in health.

5. **Combat Vaccine Hesitancy:**

Strong communication strategies and community-driven approaches are needed to address misinformation and build trust in immunization programs. Engaging local leaders and stakeholders in advocacy will help increase vaccine acceptance.

6. **Strengthen Accountability and Transparency:**

Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks will ensure that immunization funds are used effectively and efficiently. Community involvement in oversight will further enhance trust in the system.

7. **Support Regional Collaboration and Learning:**

Regional sharing of successful strategies and best practices should be prioritized. The example of Uganda's political engagement and Malawi's health financing dialogue can be replicated across other countries facing similar challenges.

Conclusion

The webinar emphasized the critical importance of securing sustainable immunization financing to ensure every African child has access to life-saving vaccines. With collective action, innovative solutions, and strategic investments, stakeholders can overcome the barriers currently hindering immunization progress. By fostering partnerships, prioritizing domestic financing, and ensuring transparency, Africa can create a resilient immunization system that protects its children from preventable diseases. The insights shared in this session provide a roadmap for action, underscoring the need for bold investments, enhanced accountability, and greater collaboration to secure the future of immunization in Africa.