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## **Childhood vaccines to reach 37 more nations thanks to UN-backed initiative**



UNICEF and GAVI are providing vaccines as well as vitamin A supplements for children under five, to boost their immune systems

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A United Nations-backed scheme that delivers vital immunizations to those who need them the most announced today that it will provide funding for 37 more developing countries to introduce vaccines against the two leading causes of death among children – diarrhoea and pneumonia.

The announcement comes one day after the Executive Committee of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) approved funding for 16 more developing countries to introduce rotavirus vaccines and 18 more countries to introduce pneumococcal vaccines. Of the 37 countries approved for the vaccines, 24 are in Africa.

Rotavirus is the leading cause of severe diarrhoea in children under five years of age, killing more than half a million children each year worldwide – 50 per cent of them in Africa – and causing illness in several million more.

Pneumococcal disease causes pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis and also takes the lives of more than half a million children each year worldwide, the vast majority of them in Africa and Asia.

“These new vaccines will prevent millions of children from dying of pneumonia and diarrhoea, the biggest killers of children under five,” said Anthony Lake, the Executive Director of the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), which is a member of the Alliance along with the UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)).

“In rolling out these vaccines, we need to focus especially on reaching the children at greatest risk, for it is among the most vulnerable that these vaccines can make the biggest difference, especially if they are combined with better nutrition, sanitation and other critical interventions,” added Mr. Lake.

By 2015, GAVI and its partners plan to support more than 40 of the world’s poorest countries to rollout rotavirus vaccines and immunise more than 50 million children. Sudan, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Guyana, and Honduras have already introduced rotavirus vaccines with GAVI’s support.

WHO Director-General Margaret Chan noted that the high number of applications for funding that were approved yesterday is yet another milestone in the fight to prevent child deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases.

“As demand for new vaccines increases further, WHO will continue providing critical support to countries for decision-making on new vaccines, surveillance, and immunization programme planning, training, and evaluation,” said Dr. Chan.

Since its launch in 2000, GAVI has reached over 250 million children with new and under-used vaccines.

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