

We, the undersigned civil society organizations and platforms, recognize the essential value of immunization in saving millions of lives around the world, including millions on the African continent. Immunization has been critical in ensuring health and well-being in Africa, including as a major contributor to the reduction in child deaths in Africa by more than half between 1990 and 2012. Immunizations are also a significant driver of economic growth, and strong immunization programs are a cornerstone of the robust universal health systems critical to helping countries achieve their economic and development goals.

One of the most successful and cost-effective public health interventions, immunization programs globally have saved the lives of more than thirty million children in the last 15 years alone according to the World Health Organization. Recognizing the critical role and impact of immunization, the global health community, in partnership with World Health Organization, declared the period of 2011-2020 the “Decade of Vaccines” and established a vision to accelerate the public health impact of global vaccination by 2020: the Global Vaccines Action Plan, ratified by 194 United Nations member states.

Impressive progress has been made over the last decade in improving immunization coverage across the region, including the remarkable elimination of transmission of wild poliovirus. However, this progress has recently stagnated and the key targets of the Global Vaccine Action Plan remain off-track; we are not making the progress we should to achieve these critically important goals, with only one target achieved by 2015 interim measures. The Sustainable Development Goals call for ending preventable deaths of newborns and children under five years and this can only be achieved through full and timely access to immunization and other essential health services.

Despite efforts made so far by governments and the international community, one in four children in the region still do not have access to basic immunization services and the number of deaths from vaccine-preventable illnesses remains extremely high. Over one and a half million deaths in children every year could be prevented if they had access to immunization services.¹ Immunization and health systems need to be strengthened to ensure universal access. This requires strong commitment and action, alongside sufficient and sustainable financing to drive change. Governments are the primary duty-bearers, responsible for providing universal health coverage and ensuring the health of all citizens.

We call on the governments of all countries present here at the first-ever Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa, and across the region, to commit themselves to:

1. Ensure that all residents of their country, especially the poorest and most marginalized, have access to immunization and other essential health services to attain universal immunization coverage goals by 2020;
2. Strengthen health systems that deliver immunization services, especially through ensuring a strong health workforce in reach of all communities, sufficient and sustainable financing, and a strong supply chain for uninterrupted purchase and delivery of vaccines in sufficient quantity to meet the population’s needs through increasing the national budget dedicated to health by 2020;
3. Ensure that no financial barrier prevents a child from accessing life-saving vaccinations by committing to and implementing universal health coverage policies;
4. Adopt lessons learned from the effort to eradicate polio from the continent, and ensure that the investment in polio eradication is effectively leveraged to support immunization and other health goals ;

5. 5. Reach all six of the targets agreed to under the Global Vaccines Action Plan by 2020, including achieving full coverage of the Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTP3) vaccine and all vaccines in national immunization programs;
6. Engage and support civil society to contribute to the reduction of immunization inequity, including by raising community awareness and public demand for immunization programs.

We, the undersigned civil society groups, pledge to take action on bridging the gap on immunization, utilizing our unique capacity as civil society to forge connections between communities, health services, and the governments responsible to those communities.

Our contribution is to:

1. Support government efforts in delivering vaccination, ensuring that these services reach communities in hard-to-reach locations and marginalized communities;
2. Support efforts to increase the acceptability and uptake of vaccines in these communities through demand creation activities;
3. Deliver immunization services in emergency and crisis contexts where appropriate;
4. Assist governments to improve the performance and management of the systems that deliver vaccination;
5. Participate in the elaboration, implementation, and monitoring of health and immunisation policies;
6. Hold governments accountable to deliver the immunization services needed by their entire populations, especially the poorest and most marginalized members of society;
7. Raise the voice of communities by supporting and empowering them to participate in immunization processes and accountability mechanisms; and
8. Hold donor country governments and multilateral institutions accountable to fulfil the pledges they have made to deliver funding and support for immunization and ensure this is aligned with national health plans and priorities.

ⁱ WHO statistics, 2008.

http://www.who.int/immunization/monitoring_surveillance/burden/estimates/en/