

Proposal: Japan's Leadership in an Unstable World

Proposal

NGO Reaching Zero-Dose Children

June 2025

Background

Global vaccination rates have declined since 2020 due to a combination of factors including COVID-19, climate change, and conflict. This has led to a worldwide increase in the number of "zero-dose children"—those who have never received a single vaccine.

Gavi Vaccine Alliance, is an international organization that helps children in low- and middle-income countries receive critical vaccines. Since its establishment in 2000, Gavi has vaccinated over one billion children and saved more than 17.3 million lives. This represents an extremely cost-effective investment, generating an economic return of \$54 for every \$1 spent. For the upcoming Gavi 6.0 period (2026-2030), there are plans to vaccinate an additional 500 million children. The alliance is also focusing on new challenges such as climate change and antimicrobial resistance. In this way, Gavi continues to provide support that adapts to global situations and the diverse needs of recipient countries, with the long-term goal of helping them build self-reliant, sustainable healthcare systems.

While total contributions to Gavi Vaccine Alliance have been increasing, a serious challenge has emerged. In January of this year, the United States announced a significant reduction in its ODA contributions. Although Gavi's funding is secure through September of this year, there is a possibility that contracts will be terminated thereafter. The U.S. contribution accounts for approximately 13% of Gavi's cumulative funding. This reduction could have unimaginable consequences, potentially causing 75 million children to miss vaccinations by 2030, resulting in 1.2 million deaths from preventable diseases.

Current Situation

This crisis, however, presents an opportunity for Japan to demonstrate leadership in the international community. Japan has progressively increased its contributions since Gavi 3.0, making a substantial total contribution of US\$1.6 billion to Gavi 5.0 and the COVAX Facility. Since 2021, Japan has become an anchor donor, significantly strengthening its voice on the Gavi Board.

Japan has clear strengths: a world-class universal health care system, long-standing trust built through high-quality ODA, and innovative advanced medical technologies. Leveraging these assets in the field of global health directly benefits Japan's national interests by establishing international cooperation systems for emergencies, promoting the overseas expansion of Japanese companies, and enhancing Japan's influence in shaping international rules.

Based on the above, we believe the following perspectives are necessary to overcome the current situation:

1. Maintain and continue financial support for Gavi Vaccine Alliance.
2. Promote human resource development by leveraging the UHC Knowledge Hub.

Proposals

1. Maintain and Continue Financial Support for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

We advocate for further financial support to Gavi Vaccine Alliance, to position global health as a priority for diplomacy and health security. We expect Japan to make a strong pledge to Gavi 6.0 that not only compensates for the reduction in U.S. contributions but also demonstrates a scale of leadership in the international community, thereby making Japan's commitment clear.

2. Promote Human Resource Development Leveraging the UHC Knowledge Hub

The current UHC (Universal Health Coverage) Knowledge Hub initiative is based on a tripartite partnership among the WHO, the World Bank, and the Government of Japan. It plans for experienced experts to leverage Japan's experience and knowledge in UHC to provide practical training opportunities for health administrators and medical professionals from developing countries in areas such as vaccine program management and strengthening primary healthcare.

To carry these efforts into the future and make Japan's international contributions sustainable, we believe it is necessary to "develop young professionals" who will lead the next generation.

It is essential to build a "development ecosystem" that thickens Japan's pool of talent supporting international contributions. This ecosystem would continuously produce human resources with diverse expertise in areas such as health financing, medical policy, data analysis, and health crisis management, all under the clear goal of UHC.

Specifically, we call for society as a whole to build and provide a "seamless development path" tailored to the career stages of young professionals. This path would range from basic education at domestic universities and graduate schools, to specialized and practical training at the UHC Knowledge Hub, to hands-on experience at international organizations and JICA, and finally to active roles within domestic institutions or the Hub itself.

Conclusion

With five years remaining until 2030, the target year for achieving UHC, improving access to basic medical services—a core component of UHC—and building resilient healthcare systems to sustain it have become increasingly important. We strongly hope that Japan will not only continue its innovative multilateral aid, such as its support for Gavi Vaccine Alliance, but also become a global leader in the healthcare field, starting with the UHC Knowledge Hub.