

GAVI: committed to India's immunization campaign

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Following recent reports regarding the withdrawal of funding by GAVI, the organization has now issued clarification on the matter. While it has not denied that it would eventually curtail its funding support in the next five years but has trashed claims that its move would in any way affect the Indian immunization campaign.

In a media statement issued recently, it mentioned, "An article published recently in an Indian newspaper stated that Gavi was withdrawing funding from India, thereby jeopardising the Government of India's ongoing efforts to improve immunization coverage. That is not the case. We remain a committed partner of India and we will continue to support the country in its endeavours to immunize more of its children against life-threatening diseases."

GAVI currently supports pentavalent vaccine which offers protection against five diseases (diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTP), hepatitis B, and Haemophilus influenzae type b) as well as providing funding to help India to strengthen its health systems. Between 2000 and 2015, the alliance has disbursed more than US\$ 240 million to help India to immunise its children against life-threatening diseases. Additionally, GAVI has committed \$107 million to support health systems strengthening in India, which is likely to play a role in the success of Mission Indradhanush, over the next five years.

Explaining the reasons behind the proposed withdrawal, the statement said, "Thanks to its growing economy, India is projected to reach the threshold of \$1,580 Gross National Income per capita which means it has entered what is known as the 'graduation' phase in relation to Gavi support."

While making it clear that there is no rift with the government, it again mentioned the five year target. "Over the next five years, GAVI and India will work together towards financing the introductions of some new vaccines and assuring that these will ultimately have budget provisions within the government of India budget so that children in India continue to have access to vaccines for generations to come," it said.

GAVI also applauded what is called the excellent work by the Government of India to improve immunization coverage under 'Mission Indradhanush' and its work to protect the lives of children living in 201 of the most at risk districts in the country.