

## GAVI Announces Collaborations to Support the Global Health Supply Chain

(Source: GAVI Press Release)

Recognizing the critical role that health supply chain leaders and managers play in ensuring the availability of critical vaccines and health commodities, three donor agencies – Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have established a new partnership to jointly offer an updated version of its Strategic Training Executive Program (STEP 2.0). The transformative program will increase supply chain efficiency to improve health outcomes for many countries struggling to provide access to medicines and other health commodities.

Managed by People that Deliver – a global coalition hosted by UNICEF Supply Division – STEP 2.0 is specifically tailored to the needs of health supply chain leaders and managers. It blends critical elements of self-paced learning, facilitator-led training, on-the-job application of leadership skills and coaching support.

Gavi’s original model, developed in 2015, enhances the management capacity of immunization supply chains through a structured training program **and is supported by the IFPW Foundation (along with its member partner GlaxoSmithKline) and the UPS Foundation.** More than 300 participants from 22 countries have benefitted from the original STEP program.

What makes STEP unique is that it pairs public health supply chain leaders with private sector supply chain experts. STEP 2.0 goes even further by leveraging the technical strengths of each organization’s supply chain leadership programs, including USAID’s Lead Lab Initiative and the Transformational Leadership Program, a change management program for supply chain executives.

Dr. Seth Berkley, Gavi CEO (and a planned keynote speaker for the IFPW Foundation’s upcoming 2021 Virtual Fundraising Benefit) explained the important skills gap that STEP 2.0 aims to address, “Leadership skills are critical for supply chain management – yet often the leaders and managers of public health supply chains in low- and middle-income countries are former front-line health workers and have not been supported to develop these and other soft skills. This collaboration with USAID and the Global Fund is an opportunity to build skills of immunization supply chain leaders who Gavi sees as a critical element to health systems strengthening. The announcement of this collaboration is especially timely, as public health supply chain leaders will be fundamental for the successful rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in 2021 and 2022.”

Peter Sands, Executive Director of the Global Fund, expressed his support for such an innovative collaboration. He stated, “Efficient health supply chain systems are critical to fight pandemics and are a key component of resilient and sustainable systems for health. The STEP 2.0 program offers a unique opportunity to help strengthen in-country supply chain systems and ensure lifesaving health products are delivered where they are

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## In Brief...

- ◆ Brazilian wholesaler **Profarma Group** reported 13.8% increase in gross revenue, reaching a record R\$6.3 billion (US\$948.5 million), and net profits also reaching an all-time high of R\$52.3 million (US\$7.9 million). Gross revenue for its distribution business unit increased 16.4% year-over-year to R\$6.0 billion. Separately, Profarma CEO, **Sammy Birmarcker** has once again joined the IFPW Board of Directors as an At-Large director from Latin America effective immediately.

- ◆ **Walgreens Boots Alliance** posted sales of US\$32.8 billion, an increase of 4.6% year-over-year. The company attributed the increase to strong international growth, its joint venture in Germany and its U.S. business. Operating income totaled US\$832 million, down from US\$1.1 billion a year ago due to adverse COVID-19 impacts on both U.S. and international markets (which were offset slightly by its cost-management efforts.) Net earnings were up 8.4% year-over-year, totaling US\$1 billion.

- ◆ The **Healthcare Distribution Alliance (HDA)** today launched a campaign, “*Health Delivered*”, to communicate the healthcare distribution industry’s integral role and logistics expertise during the COVID-19 response, as well as distributors’ ongoing responsibility to fulfill the daily healthcare needs of all Americans. The campaign includes a television ad showcasing HDA member personnel working tirelessly in the face of a global pandemic. HDA president and CEO, **Chester “Chip” Davis** stated, “As a vital link between 1,400 manufacturers and more than 180,000 providers... distributors have risen to meet the challenges of COVID-19, doing their part to ensure every single community has access to lifesaving medicines and medical supplies.”

- ◆ **AstraZeneca** announced its COVID-19 vaccine was 76% effective in a new analysis of its U.S. trial, only slightly lower

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## Millions of Vaccine Doses, But Who Will Deliver Them?

(Source: An Article by Michael Ingoe for DEVEX Newswire)

While the production of vaccinations is happening in full force across dozens of pharmaceutical manufacturers, vaccine readiness assessments in 128 low- and middle-income countries found that while 85% of countries have vaccination plans, as little as 30% have developed the actual processes to train the large number of vaccinators who will be needed.

So that countries can receive vaccination shipments through the COVAX program, they are required to submit a National Deployment and Vaccination Plan. According to information from a ministers of health briefing by the World Health Organization’s Regional Office for Africa on February 17th, the review committee approved all 37 of the NDVPs that have been received thus far.

“Countries have had to submit detailed readiness and delivery plans before receiving vaccines, showing they are able

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## Gavi (cont.)...

needed the most. We look forward to working with Gavi and USAID on such an innovative program.”

The success of the first STEP program has increased demand for course offerings and led to the development of the updated program, which reflects the need for supply chain executives to share their experiences with the private sector and drive transformational change and continuous improvement within the supply chain systems. Since the creation of STEP, UNICEF Supply Division has also played a key role, advising on the structure and content of the training curriculum and it currently convenes the STEP Steering Committee.

Going forward, PtD will work closely with donors, implementing partners and other key stakeholders to oversee and coordinate the rollout of the STEP 2.0 program is set for release in early 2021.

*The IFPW Foundation's 2021 Virtual Fundraising Benefit on April 29th & 30th directly supports Gavi's STEP 2.0 program with funding to develop STEP 2.0 courses and assistance in securing supply chain executives to participate in facilitation and coaching for participants in the STEP 2.0 program. For more information on the IFPW Foundation 2021 Virtual Fundraising Benefit, please contact Christina Tucker at [c.tucker@ifpwfoundation.org](mailto:c.tucker@ifpwfoundation.org).*

## Vaccine Doses (cont.)...

to begin rolling out vaccines in a swift and effective way,” a spokesperson for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance stated to Devex.

“COVAX and its partners continue to work with governments to address any challenges that may arise so that health systems are ready for widespread deployment as further doses become available,” the Gavi spokesperson added, “The current health workforce alone is not large enough to handle the undertaking of this magnitude.”

The World Bank intends to deploy US\$12 billion to help countries purchase and distribute vaccines, tests, and treatments. Readiness assessments are meant to instruct how these funds are to be distributed.

According to David Bryden, director of the frontline Health Workers Coalition, some countries are struggling to cover the operational costs while waiting for World Bank funding to be approved. Bryden said, “The implication to me is that Gavi is providing the vaccines even to countries that are still struggling to put together the budget to actually provide the vaccinations.”

The World Bank's assessment found that while countries appear to have gaps in their readiness for COVID-19 vaccination campaigns, “most have prepared well enough in most of the essential areas to begin inoculating their populations as soon as vaccines become available.”

Complicating vaccination efforts, according to Bryden, are reports of health care worker strikes in 84 countries since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In addition, health workers are reporting the increasing prevalence of depression, anxiety, insomnia, and burnout, further increasing work absences.

Bryden added, “We want countries to be ambitious and bold with the plans that they're putting forward, but then that begs the question of, ok, well where's that additional support going to come from?”

## In Brief (cont.)...

than the level in an earlier report this week which received criticism for using outdated data. The company also reiterated that the shot, developed with **Oxford University**, was 100% effective against severe or critical forms of the disease. “The vaccine efficacy against severe disease, including death, puts the AstraZeneca vaccine in the same ballpark with other vaccines,” said *William Schaffner*, an infectious disease expert from the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, adding that he expects the shots to gain U.S. approval for emergency use authorization. The trial involved 32,449 participants and showed consistent efficacy across ethnicity and age.

- ◆ The European Union is advancing emergency legislation that will give it broad powers to curb exports for the next six weeks of COVID-19 vaccines manufactured in the European Union. The move comes in response to supply shortages in the EU that have created political division amid a rising third wave on the continent. Legislation includes new rules that will make it harder for pharmaceutical companies producing COVID-19 vaccines in the EU to export them and are likely to disrupt supplies destined for Britain.

- ◆ **Merck Inc.** announced that it intends to spin off its women's health, biosimilars and established brands business into a stand-alone publicly traded company, **Organon**. Completion of the transaction is subject to a number of conditions including effectiveness of the registration statement filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, as well as other customary conditions. It also requires final approval of Merck's board of directors. Completion is expected in the second quarter of 2021.

- ◆ **Pfizer** has announced that it is progressing to multiple ascending doses after completing the dosing of single ascending doses in a U.S. Phase 1 study in healthy adults to evaluate the safety and tolerability of an investigational, novel oral antiviral therapeutic for the virus that causes COVID-19. The oral antiviral clinical candidate *PF-07321332*, a SARS-CoV2-3CL protease inhibitor, has demonstrated potent in vitro anti-viral activity against COVID-19, as well as activity against other coronaviruses, suggesting potential for use in the treatment of COVID-19 and potential use to address future coronavirus threats. Separately, the company announced that it is selling its biologics facility in China to **WuXi Biologics**, due to the crowded biosimilars market.

- ◆ European pharmaceutical manufacturer **Catalent** will begin production of **Johnson & Johnson's** COVID-19 vaccine at its Italian manufacturing facility. Catalent, who has produced COVID-19 vaccines for **Moderna** and **AstraZeneca**, will expand its fill-finish plant in Anagni, Italy which was purchased from Bristol Myers Squibb in January of 2020.

- ◆ India has put a temporary hold on all major exports of the **AstraZeneca** COVID-19 vaccine made by the **Serum Institute of India** to meet demands in-country due to a surge in the infection rate. The move will also affect supplies to the Gavi/WHO-backed COVAX vaccine-sharing facility through which more than 180 countries are expected to receive vaccine doses.

*(Sources: Company Press Releases, Devex Newswire, Drug Store News, FiercePharma, Reuters and World Pharma News)*