



**Launch of the WHO report
"Women and health: today's evidence tomorrow's agenda"
9 November 2009, Geneva, Switzerland**

**Statement by Julian Lob-Levyt, Chief Executive Officer
GAVI Alliance**

Julian Lob-Levyt, CEO of the GAVI Alliance, welcomed the release of a compelling new report on women and health by the World Health Organization (WHO) today.

Taking a life-course approach, the report reviews the most recent evidence of women's health from childhood to older age, and sets the agenda for bold leadership and coordinated action.

GAVI recognises that women's health merits special attention. Women in low-income countries are more likely to live shorter lives and suffer from more illness. While the world has made great achievements in improving health, women's health remains shamefully neglected. Millennium Development Goal 5 to reduce maternal mortality has seen the least progress of the health MDGs.

The GAVI Alliance is working with partners to accelerate the availability of vaccines that protect women against cervical cancer and rubella. The report points out that there are many more deaths from cervical cancer in low-income countries than in high-income countries, mainly because of a higher incidence of human papillomavirus (HPV) infection at younger ages, late detection and inadequate access to treatment. New vaccines that protect against HPV are now available. GAVI wants to ensure they reach women and girls in the developing world.

"It is simply unacceptable that more than 220 000 women in poor countries are dying each year from cervical cancer because they don't have screening services and the vaccines that are available in wealthy countries," said Dr Lob-Levyt.

As the proportion of older women in developing countries continues to grow, we can expect the toll of illness and deaths from cervical cancer to increase, placing an enormous burden on families and countries' health systems and economies.

GAVI supports WHO's efforts to increase attention on women's health. The GAVI Alliance gender policy adopted in 2008 aims to promote increased coverage, effectiveness and efficiency of immunisation and related health services by ensuring that all girls and boys, women and men, receive equal access to these services. The Alliance is committed to supporting the development of health services that enhance gender equality and focus on the well-being of girls and women. GAVI will exercise leadership, raise awareness and promote country-level and global efforts towards gender equality in immunisation and health services.