July 17, 2011

**GAVI’s historic rollout of rotavirus vaccines in Africa begins today!**

This morning, hundreds of infants in Khartoum, Sudan received their first doses of vaccine that will help prevent severe rotavirus and the deadly dehydrating diarrhea it causes. Today marks a milestone in global health—the first nationwide introduction of rotavirus vaccines by a GAVI-eligible African country. “We finally have the vaccine in our hands; it is a great and exciting day in our lives and we are happy that this is a reality now,” said Dr. Amani Abdelmoniem Mustafa, the manager of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI). “We share our joy with our supportive partners at GAVI, WHO, UNICEF, and PATH who are part of this victory over childhood diarrhea in Sudan.”

Each year, more than a quarter of a million African children die from rotavirus infection. Six of the seven countries with the highest infant mortality rates from rotavirus worldwide are located in Africa—Angola, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Somalia. African children account for nearly 50% of all deaths globally from rotavirus infection.

Until today, life-saving rotavirus vaccines were out of reach of most children in Africa. South Africa (which is not GAVI-eligible due to its higher income level) introduced rotavirus vaccines in 2008 and 2009, and there are plans for many other GAVI-eligible African countries to roll out rotavirus vaccines in the next few years. GAVI’s commitment to support the introduction of rotavirus vaccines in more than 40 countries by 2015, many in Africa, will reverse the tragic story by preventing hundreds of thousands of unnecessary child deaths from diarrhea across the African continent.

Many challenges remain in providing affordable rotavirus vaccines to children in Africa. Only though continuing to work in partnership can we overcome these obstacles and deliver life-saving rotavirus vaccines and other diarrheal disease interventions to the children who need them most.

Please click here for [GAVI’s statement supporting the African introduction of rotavirus vaccines](#).

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The PATH Rotavirus Vaccine Trials Partnership is a collaboration between PATH, the World Health Organization, the US Centers for Disease Control, clinical study sites, and vaccine manufacturers. The partnership's activities are funded by the GAVI Alliance.

For background information on rotavirus and diarrheal disease, please see www.rotavirusvaccine.org and www.defeatDD.org. For background information on the GAVI Alliance’s support for rotavirus vaccine introduction, see www.gavialliance.org.