

The recently approved vaccine against pneumonia, meningitis and blood poisoning (sepsis) could be available in Kenya as soon as the Government expresses interest and commitment. In a letter to the Minister for Health, Gavi Alliance has expressed its interest in funding of the pneumococcal vaccine programs in the country.

The GAVI Alliance (formerly known as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation) is a public-private partnership focused on increasing children's access to vaccines in poor countries.

"Your country is eligible to apply for financial support from the GAVI Alliance for introduction of pneumococcal vaccine in your immunization programme," said the letter from Julian Lob-Levyt, the executive secretary for Gavi Alliance. According to the secretary,

Global body to finance new pneumonia vaccine

the revised vaccine support application guidelines will be available by August this year, and the first deadline for submission of applications for the support will be on 28 September.

The Alliance Board approved funding to support pneumococcal and Rotavirus vaccines introduction in GAVI-eligible countries, to speed up the progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

For these funds to be released, the Government has been asked to consider the health impact of preventing pneumococcal diseases, the available vaccine presentation and

its operational implications, and the level of co-financing commitment expected from the country.

Invasive pneumococcal infection is a major cause of pneumonia, meningitis and sepsis in children and adults globally. The vaccine protects infants and children, also reducing disease transmission in the unimmunized population. The vaccine may be administered concurrently with other vaccines in infant immunization programs.

The burden of pneumococcal disease is substantially higher among individuals who are infected with HIV.

And since the conjugate vaccines have been shown to be safe and efficacious when used in children infected with HIV, the World Health Organisation recommends that countries with a high prevalence of HIV prioritize the introduction of what is called *PVC-7*.

Furthermore, populations with a high prevalence of other underlying conditions that increase the risk of pneumococcal disease, such as sickle-cell, are a target for the vaccine.

WHO recommends the inclusion of these vaccines in national immunization programs.

The GAVI Alliance will provide a financial contribution towards the costs of pneumococcal vaccine introduction, such as health worker training, cold chain upgrades, safe disposal, changes in immunization monitoring and surveillance, advocacy and social mobilization.

—ISAIAH ESIPISU