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'Lives in the Balance' lays focus on women, children health during COVID-19 response, recovery

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The call seeks to strengthenÂ investment, policies, and services for the recovery of health services, as well as protection of rights and future socio-economic resilience



Lives in the Balance was organised by Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH) a multi-constituency partnership hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO), together with the CORE Group, Global Financing Facility for Women, Children, and Adolescents, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance which was attended by more than 1000 global citizens.

Key Speakers included Anuradha Gupta, CEO, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance; Lopa Banerjee, Chief, Civil Society Section, UN Women; Vandita Morarka Founder & CEO, One Future Collective, India, Helen Clark, Former Prime Minister, New Zealand and Board Chair of PMNCH, Mia Mottley - Prime Minister, Barbados, Michelle Bachelet - UN High Commissioner, Human Rights, Borge Brende, President, World Economic Forum, Jennifer Klein, Executive Director, White House Gender Policy Council, US.

“The knock-on impact of the pandemic on childhood vaccination in lower income countries has been devastating, with millions of children missing out on timely, life-saving immunisations,” said Anuradha Gupta, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

Clark stated, “COVID-19 is deepening and magnifying social inequalities compounded by ethnicity, gender, income, geography, and other factors. We must act now, not just to protect progress previously made, but also to work towards a world that is far more equitable than the one that existed before the pandemic.”

A seven-point call to action on COVID-19, backed by PMNCH’s 1,000-member platform, seeks to protect and prioritise the rights and health of women, children, and adolescents during the COVID-19 response and recovery. The call seeks to strengthen investment, policies, and services for the recovery of health services, as well as protection of rights and future socio-economic resilience.

The statements, aligning with the PMNCH call to action, outlined a significant array of efforts to improve SRHR, gender equality, service quality, and adolescent health and well-being, among other priorities.

In addition to the ongoing and catastrophic direct impact of COVID-19 in many parts of the world, women, children, and adolescents are affected indirectly because of widespread disruptions to essential health, nutrition, and social services under lockdown conditions. This increases the risk of mortality and morbidity, including from treatable and preventable causes, denying the right to protection and care.