**Sample Letter: To Policymakers Advocating a Commitment to Cervical Cancer Elimination**

*How to use this template*  
This document provides a pre-written introduction letter to advocate for HPV vaccination in the context of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) global cervical cancer elimination strategy. Share with policymakers and local government officials from ministries of health, finance, and/or education, as well as cross-sectoral partners and key community leaders to encourage their commitment to eliminate cervical cancer. Tailor the message by modifying sections highlighted in yellow with country, regional, or local-specific data points, as needed, to increase relevance and impact. Add your organization’s logo as appropriate. **Be certain to delete this section before sending.**

**Subject: India’s Response to Eliminating Cervical Cancer**

Dear Honourable [INSERT SALUTATION AND NAME OF MINISTER],

On behalf of [INSERT NAME OF MEDICAL SOCIETY], I am pleased to reach out to you following the adoption of the World Health Organization’s (WHO) global strategy on eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem by global leaders [1]. The strategy includes the goals of vaccinating 90% of girls with the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine by the age of 15; screening 70% of women for cervical cancer by the age of 35 and again by age 45; and treating 90% of women with pre-cancer and managing invasive cancer in 90% of women. Encouragingly, India has signed on to this endeavour, and we humbly urge you to join in making its implementation a success.

Insert relevant and up-to-date **global** data on cervical cancer burden [Example: As the fourth most common cancer among women, cervical cancer claims the life of one woman every two minutes, or more than 300,000 women every year [2], the large majority of whom are in low- and middle-income countries [2,3].

Insert relevant and up-to-date **national** statistics on cervical cancer burden [Example: In India alone, one woman dies of cervical cancer every eight minutes [4]. In 2020, 123,907 women got cervical cancer and 77,348 women lost their lives due to it [5]. Gravely, India contributes to nearly one-fifth of the global burden of cervical cancer [6].

Insert relevant and up-to-date statistics on cervical cancer burden and impact in your **state** [Example: ICMR data shows that cervical cancer contributes to X% of cancer in {state name} and claims X lives every year]

**Yet cervical cancer is preventable, and one of the most effective tools to eliminate it is HPV vaccination, which can prevent most cervical cancer when given at the right age [7].**

WHO’s global elimination strategy recommends HPV vaccination as one of the key steps to cervical cancer elimination, the target being at least 90% of girls fully vaccinated before age 15 [8]. HPV vaccines have been available in India since 2008 [9] and have the potential to prevent cervical cancer in more than one hundred thousand Indian women each year. But since their inception, the uptake of the HPV vaccines has been very low. Past experiences in Indian states demonstrate that successful state-wide introduction and high uptake of the vaccines are achievable. We now have an opportunity to champion this effective tool in your state to save the lives of hundreds and thousands of women and girls.

We therefore humbly urge the [INSERT NAME OF STATE] government to support the catch-up on HPV vaccination for all girls ages 9 to 14 years old in the [INSERT NAME OF STATE] routine immunisation schedule. To that end we request you:

* Allocate and ensure state and local financing to support HPV vaccination catch-up for all girls ages 9 to 14 years old.
* Promote educational messages in communities to increase awareness about cervical cancer, demystifying and destigmatizing the disease, while increasing demand for HPV vaccines.
* Identify cross-sectoral collaborations. For example, the State Department of Health and Family Welfare could collaborate with the State Department of Education for strengthened integration and expanded reach of programming such as school-based HPV vaccination programmes.
* Adopt global and Indian best practices to ensure high quality, affordable, and effective cervical cancer prevention services within your state programme.

As a representative of an organisation of physicians committed to cervical cancer elimination, we urge you to strongly consider the above and commit to supporting HPV vaccination in [INSERT NAME OF STATE] as part of the WHO’s global strategy in India. We have enough reasons to act. If all Indian girls were vaccinated on time, it could save nearly 50,000 lives per year [10]. Investment in cervical cancer prevention, like HPV vaccination, can help India advance achievement of gender equality, women's health and development, and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We have heard our global leaders commit to eliminating this life-threatening disease so that our wives, sisters, mothers, friends, and daughters can thrive. We must now echo that commitment with local action. Success will require partnership and we look forward to partnering with you to achieve our ambition of a world free from cervical cancer, starting here in India and in [INSERT NAME OF STATE].

I hope you will consider making a public commitment. I would be happy to discuss with you what this could look like.

Sincerely,

[INSERT NAME], [INSERT ORGANISATION]

**References**

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10. Bhatla N. Elimination of Cervical Cancer and the Role of HPV Vaccination [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2022 Sep 29]. Available from:<https://projectsanchar.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Elimination-of-Cervical-Cancer-and-the-Role-of-HPV-Vaccination-Dr-Neerja-Bhatla.pdf>