



For Release: November 12, 2014 @ 00:00 BST

Pneumonia prevention and care available for every child is key to defeat world's #1 infectious killer of children

On the sixth annual World Pneumonia Day, the Global Coalition Against Child Pneumonia calls for urgent action to end preventable child deaths caused by pneumonia by 2030

(London, UK) — Every day, more than 2,500 children under age five die of pneumonia, which is close to one million each year. This is nearly 1 in 6 of the total deaths in that age group. Today, the world commemorates the sixth annual World Pneumonia Day by calling on leaders to increase universal access for pneumonia prevention and care in order to end preventable child deaths by 2030.

Although the number of under-five deaths worldwide has decreased by half since 1990, many countries are not on track to reach Millennium Development Goal 4 (MDG4), which calls for a two-thirds reduction in under-five mortality by 2015. Poor and rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are most behind on achieving this goal, with India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia accounting for almost 50 percent of total pneumonia child deaths. As we approach the MDG deadline of 2015, the world needs to speed up progress and increase political commitment toward reducing child mortality, which requires addressing preventable deaths from pneumonia, other infectious diseases, and complications around prematurity at child birth.

“Combatting pneumonia is essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals related to health and child survival, and to laying the groundwork for ending all preventable maternal and child deaths by 2030,” said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who launched the [Every Woman Every Child movement](#) in 2010 to accelerate progress on women’s and children’s health. “We need a persistent and integrated approach to this preventable and treatable killer of children. I call on all sectors to come together now to defeat this disease.”

Children are dying from pneumonia because proven interventions that boost their natural defences and create a healthy environment, such as adequate nutrition, early and exclusive breastfeeding for newborns, vaccinations, hand-washing with soap, and low-emission cook stoves, are not available to all. For sick children and newborns, early access to antibiotics and oxygen therapy can be lifesaving. Better equipment for the detection of pneumonia is also essential. Equitable access to the right prevention, diagnosis, and care is crucial to defeat the disease.

Pneumonia and diarrhoea together account for one quarter of all under-five deaths worldwide, and can largely be targeted by the same interventions. Moreover, bringing childhood healthcare closer to

the homes of those most affected increases their access to quality prevention and care, which can save the lives of hundreds of thousands of children. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF's [Integrated Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea \(GAPPD\)](#) proposes a cohesive approach to ending preventable pneumonia and diarrhoea deaths.

Today, events commemorating World Pneumonia Day are being held in countries throughout the world. In India, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan and South Africa, ministries of health and partners in child health, such as UNICEF, WHO, USAID, Jhpiego, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and Malaria Consortium are organising various awareness raising activities, including panel discussions, press briefings, roundtables, lectures, and a parade.

Malaria Consortium produced radio and television programmes about pneumonia in Ethiopia, Uganda and South Sudan, and pharmaceutical company, GlaxoSmithKline has developed a global "If Only You Pneu" [video animation](#) sharing children's voices on pneumonia and its prevention. In the United States, IVAC also released its [2014 Pneumonia and Diarrhoea Progress Report](#) today and the Gates Foundation pneumonia programme has announced increased funding this year for pneumonia prevention among neonates. WHO has just published [new guidelines on indoor air quality](#) and recently revised its [classification and treatment of childhood pneumonia at health facilities](#) to increase effective lifesaving interventions.

These worldwide events underline the global call by the Global Coalition Against Child Pneumonia. Strengthened commitment to reach every child with interventions that prevent and treat pneumonia is needed to reach the MDGs and must be sustained in the post-2015 development agenda. Increased investment in pneumonia interventions and a universal scale-up of those that are proven to work are crucial for populations most affected in order to defeat this killer disease.

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***World Pneumonia Day** was established in 2009 to raise awareness about pneumonia; to promote interventions to protect against, prevent, and treat pneumonia; and to generate action in combatting pneumonia. For more information about World Pneumonia Day, [facts and figures](#) and activities, please visit www.worldpneumoniaday.org.*

***The Global Coalition Against Child Pneumonia** was established in 2009 to raise awareness about the toll of pneumonia, the world's leading infectious killer of children, and to advocate for global action to protect against, to effectively treat and to help prevent this deadly illness. Including more than 140 non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, academic institutions, government agencies and foundations, the Coalition provides leadership for **World Pneumonia Day**, marked every year on November 12th.*

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Disease control, better health

Press Release Quote Sheet

Today Marks Sixth Annual World Pneumonia Day

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations

"Combatting pneumonia is essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals related to health and child survival, and to laying the groundwork for ending all preventable maternal and child deaths by 2030. We need a persistent and integrated approach to this preventable and treatable killer of children. I call on all sectors to come together now to defeat this disease."

Dr Flavia Bustreo, WHO Assistant Director General, Family, Women's and Children's Health

"Tackling pneumonia requires an integrated approach to look at ways to prevent and protect children from developing pneumonia in the first place as well as ways to accurately diagnose and treat the infection when present. To prevent exposure to indoor air pollution is one of the key interventions. Young children, as well as women, who spend the most time near the domestic hearth, are particularly vulnerable. Globally, more than 50% of pneumonia deaths among children under 5 are linked to household air pollution."

Mickey Chopra, UNICEF Chief of Health

"Pneumonia disproportionately afflicts the most marginalised and the poorest children, accounting for the deaths of almost 1 million children under five each year, according to UNICEF's latest estimates. Finding new, inexpensive and reliable ways of diagnosing pneumonia in low-resource health facilities, and being innovative in the treatment of the disease, will be crucial in reaching the most vulnerable children, and ending child deaths from this preventable cause."

Charles Nelson, CEO Malaria Consortium

"Malaria Consortium is excited to be convening World Pneumonia Day. Working with our partners in the Global Coalition Against Child Pneumonia we have chosen to focus this year's theme around the need for increased access to prevention and care for pneumonia. We are fully committed to defeating the world's number one infectious killer of children. Our projects fight the disease on multiple fronts: by providing better access to pneumonia diagnostic equipment, promoting the rational use of antibiotics and bringing healthcare closer to the homes of those who need it most. Children not only need more appropriate, but also much faster care. This approach is both lifesaving and cost saving for many of the poorest families throughout the world."

Keith Klugman, Director of Pneumonia Team at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

"No parent should lose a child to preventable diseases, yet nearly 1 million children die from pneumonia worldwide every year. Through the power of life-saving vaccines and other key interventions, the world is making real progress toward curbing the spread of pneumonia and we must continue this momentum to ensure children everywhere can live healthy and productive lives."

Seth Berkley, CEO of the GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance

"Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, is working to accelerate the availability of vaccines which protect the world's children against pneumonia, the leading infectious killer of under-fives. Since 2000, Gavi has helped immunise nearly 200 million children with pentavalent vaccine and more than 25 million with pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV), both of which protect against leading causes of pneumonia. We are committed to further expanding access to these vaccines as part of an integrated approach to pneumonia prevention and control."

Steve Davis, President and CEO of PATH

"More investment is needed in innovative diagnostic tools and integrative health services that combine care for other childhood illnesses, like diarrhoea, malnutrition, and malaria, to accelerate our progress in reducing preventable child deaths."

Kate O'Brien, Professor, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and Executive Director, International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC)

"We celebrate the progress in preventing pneumonia this World Pneumonia Day, while recognising the need to ensure ALL children have access to care and early diagnosis, vaccines, and medication. The devastating West African Ebola outbreak starkly highlights the gap between high- and low-income countries and inequities in systems that connect people with life-saving technologies, such as supply chains and availability of trained healthcare workers. The world's attention is now focused on this great inequality. Let us learn from this and renew our commitment to close the access gap in pneumonia interventions and put an end to these preventable deaths."

Allan Pamba, VP East Africa, GlaxoSmithKline, and co-chair of the UN Every Woman, Every Child Innovation Working Group

"Huge progress has been made against pneumonia, but with this infection still claiming almost one million children's lives each year, there is much further to go. Nobody can fight pneumonia alone: frontline health workers, novel partnerships and radical innovation are all critical to delivering real change. So we are working with Gavi to deliver our pneumococcal vaccine to poorer countries. And with Save the Children, we have registered a child-friendly powder-based antibiotic to help fight pneumonia in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Private sector participation and contribution is rising and this should be encouraged."