PRESS RELEASE

PNEUMONIA STILL RESPONSIBLE FOR ONE FIFTH OF CHILD DEATHS

On 5th World Pneumonia Day, global health bodies highlight essential interventions that will help reduce burden of disease

GENEVA, 12 November 2013 – Pneumonia remains the single biggest killer of children under five globally, claiming the lives of more than one million girls and boys every year. But pneumonia deaths are preventable.

As countries mark World Pneumonia Day on 12 November, the GAVI Alliance, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) are highlighting essential actions that can help end child deaths from this disease.

“Every 30 seconds, a child younger than five dies of pneumonia. This is a great shame as we know what it takes to prevent children from dying of this illness,” said Dr Mickey Chopra, Chief of Health, UNICEF. “Tackling pneumonia doesn’t necessarily need complicated solutions.”

Many factors contribute to pneumonia, and no single intervention can effectively prevent, treat and control it. Five simple but effective interventions, if implemented properly, will help reduce the burden of the disease that is responsible for almost one fifth of all child deaths around the world.

These are:
- Exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months and continued breastfeeding complemented by nutritious solid foods up to age 2;
- Vaccination against whooping cough (pertussis), measles, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib) and pneumococcus;
- Safe drinking water, sanitation and handwashing facilities;
- Improved cooking stoves to reduce indoor air pollution;
- Treatment, including amoxicillin dispersible tablets and oxygen;

The theme of World Pneumonia Day 2013 is “Innovate to End Child Pneumonia”. Recognizing that child mortality cannot be addressed in a vacuum, but only through integrated efforts, in April 2013, WHO and UNICEF released an Integrated Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD).

The GAPPD presents an innovative framework bringing together prevention, protection and control of both pneumonia and diarrhoea – two of the world’s leading killers of children under 5 -, to make more efficient and effective use of scarce health resources.

To mark 5th World Pneumonia Day, Mauritania and Papua New Guinea are today introducing the pneumococcal vaccine, which protects against one of the leading causes of pneumonia. With support from the GAVI Alliance, more than 50 countries will introduce this vaccine by 2015.
“The GAVI Alliance is helping to accelerate the fight against pneumonia by increasing access to pneumococcal vaccines, thanks to GAVI’s innovative Advance Market Commitment (AMC), but also to the five-in-one pentavalent vaccine which protects against *Haemophilus influenzae* type b, another major cause of pneumonia,” said Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of the GAVI Alliance.

Since the launch of the GAPPD seven months ago, several countries have taken this forward. For example, Bangladesh and Zambia are translating the GAPPD into local implementation plans in some districts. Programme managers responsible for immunisation, child health, nutrition and water and sanitation have joined forces to accelerate progress and eliminate preventable deaths from pneumonia and diarrhoea.

In addition, in October 2013, WHO published new technical advice for countries:

- Based on a review of the latest evidence, guidelines on the treatment of pneumonia were updated, recommending simpler antibiotic regimens.
- A handbook to guide district and health facility staff on how to introduce the pneumococcal vaccine emphasizes using new vaccine introductions to scale up access to other essential interventions to protect, prevent and treat pneumonia, in line with the GAPPD.

“To achieve the vision and goals of the integrated plan—to end preventable deaths from pneumonia and diarrhoea in the next generation—the children of the world need to see political will, coordinated efforts, and increased resources at the global and national levels to fight these stubborn killers,” said Dr Elizabeth Mason, Director of WHO’s Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health.

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For more information about World Pneumonia Day, visit [http://worldpneumoniaday.org/](http://worldpneumoniaday.org/)

GAVI Alliance
The GAVI Alliance is a public-private partnership committed to saving children’s lives and protecting people’s health by increasing access to immunisation in developing countries. The Alliance brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry, technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private sector partners. GAVI uses innovative finance mechanisms, including co-financing by recipient countries, to secure sustainable funding and adequate supply of quality vaccines. Since 2000, GAVI has contributed to the immunisation of an additional 440 million children and the prevention of approximately 6 million future deaths. Learn more at [www.gavialliance.org](http://www.gavialliance.org) and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.

GAVI is funded by governments [Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States], the European Commission, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, as well as private and corporate partners [Absolute Return for Kids, Anglo American plc., The Children’s Investment Fund Foundation, Comic Relief, Dutch Postcode Lottery, His Highness Sheikh Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, JP Morgan, ‘la Caixa’ Foundation, LDS Charities, Lions Clubs, OPEC and Vodafone].

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UNICEF
UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of
children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org

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World Health Organization
WHO is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. For more information, visit www.who.int

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