



For Release: November 12, 2013 @ 00:00 EST

Fifth Annual World Pneumonia Day Marks Successes and Challenges in Tackling #1 Killer of Children

Global Coalition Against Child Pneumonia Calls for Continued Investment in Innovations and Proven Tools

(BALTIMORE, MARYLAND) — Global health advocates today commemorated the fifth annual World Pneumonia Day by calling on global leaders to scale up existing interventions and invest in new diagnostics and treatments to defeat pneumonia. Each year, pneumonia kills more children than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Pneumonia took the lives of nearly 1.1 million children under 5 in 2012 alone, with more than 99 percent of these deaths in developing countries, where access to healthcare facilities and treatment is out of reach for many children.

“Pneumonia, the leading killer of children under 5 years old, is especially threatening to those born premature or living where sanitation is poor,” said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who launched the [Every Woman Every Child](#) movement in 2010 to advance progress on women’s and children’s health. “On World Pneumonia Day, I call on governments and their partners to commit to promoting breastfeeding and providing clean water, a healthy environment, and all the medicine and vaccinations children need. By working to protect children from pneumonia, we can shield them from other deadly diseases and help them to survive and thrive.”

World Pneumonia Day 2013 is marked by an integrated effort to combat both pneumonia and diarrhoea, which together account for 26 percent of all child deaths globally. Earlier this year, the World Health Organization and UNICEF released the integrated [Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea \(GAPPD\)](#), which outlines specific protection, prevention, and treatment coverage targets to dramatically reduce the number of child deaths from these two diseases. Many solutions already exist to tackle both pneumonia and diarrhoea, but implementation of these interventions is not complete.

Vaccines are one of the most effective ways to prevent pneumonia and diarrhoea. Today, with support from the [GAVI Alliance](#), Mauritania and Papua New Guinea are rolling out pneumococcal vaccine, which will help protect children against one of the leading causes of pneumonia. GAVI is on course to help more than 50 low-income nations introduce pneumococcal vaccine by 2015. By the end of next year, South Sudan will become the last of the 73 GAVI-supported countries to introduce pentavalent vaccine, which includes protection against *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib), another common cause of pneumonia. Other critical solutions, such as exclusive breastfeeding and good nutrition, handwashing with soap, access to sanitation and safe drinking water, clean cookstoves and fuels, zinc

and oral rehydration solution, amoxicillin, and vitamin A can substantially reduce child deaths if fully implemented.

The International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health released today its [2013 Pneumonia and Diarrhoea Progress Report](#), which found gradual increases in access to vaccines, treatment, and other interventions in the 15 countries with the highest numbers of child deaths from pneumonia and diarrhoea. The report found that seven countries achieved some progress toward the GAPPD targets, while eight countries had not made significant progress toward reaching targets.

UNICEF estimates that 3.5 million deaths must be prevented by the end of 2015 in order to meet the fourth Millennium Development Goal, which calls for a two-thirds reduction in under-5 mortality between 1990 and 2015. Advocates have renewed their call this World Pneumonia Day for governments to do more to meet these child survival objectives by increasing political commitment to and investments in the development of new diagnostics and treatments for pneumonia. Advocates also call on manufacturers of medical devices to step up efforts to bring technologies to market, and called on donors to strengthen their support for the development and distribution of new diagnostics technologies at affordable prices.

Events commemorating World Pneumonia Day were being held in countries throughout the world. In India, partners organized a forum on the Millennium Development Goals and a media dialogue on pneumonia. Coalition members produced radio and television programs about pneumonia in Madagascar, held press briefings in Mozambique and Uganda, produced an educational cartoon in Egypt, and organized seminars on pneumonia in Nigeria. In the United States, Coalition members distributed educational materials about pneumonia to scientific audiences and partners will host a game night on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC to educate leaders about the challenges of pneumonia and diarrhoea.

Various child survival events are being held throughout the month of November. November 17 marks World Prematurity Day, organized by the March of Dimes and partners, to raise awareness of newborn deaths, and November 19 marks World Toilet Day, to focus attention on the challenge of providing adequate sanitation.

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 combating pneumonia. For more information about World Pneumonia Day and its activities, please visit www.worldpneumoniaday.org.

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*The Global Coalition Against Child Pneumonia was established in 2009 to raise awareness about the toll of pneumonia, the world's leading 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 organizations, civil society organizations, academic institutions, government agencies and foundations, the Coalition provides leadership for **World Pneumonia Day**, marked every year on November 12th.*

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Press Release Quote Sheet

Today Marks Fifth Annual World Pneumonia Day

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

“Pneumonia, the leading killer of children under 5 years old, is especially threatening to those born premature or living where sanitation is poor. On World Pneumonia Day, I call on governments and their partners to commit to promoting breastfeeding and providing clean water, a healthy environment, and all the medicine and vaccinations children need. By working to protect children from pneumonia, we can shield them from other deadly diseases and help them to survive and thrive.”

Seth Berkley, CEO of the GAVI Alliance

“GAVI 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.”

Mickey Chopra, UNICEF Chief of Health

“Innovations in diagnosis and treatment of pneumonia are key to ending preventable child deaths, and especially in reaching the hardest-to-reach children. For instance, it is critical to find new, reliable ways of diagnosing pneumonia in low-resource health facilities where chest x-rays and lab tests are not readily available.”

Steve Davis, President and CEO of PATH

“Pneumonia cannot be addressed on its own, but only through integrated efforts to combat diarrhoea and other diseases. While today is World Pneumonia Day, we recognize and are committed to addressing the health challenges posed by both pneumonia and diarrhoea, and we call on leaders to fully fund and implement the measures outlined in the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea.”

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

“It is inexcusable that pneumonia - a preventable and treatable illness - continues to be the leading killer of children under the age of 5. While significant progress has been made with an up-tick in the number of countries using life-saving vaccines to protect kids from pneumonia, we must continue to use innovative and integrated efforts to combat pneumonia, diarrhoea and other childhood diseases.”

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

“Today, we pause and assess the progress in driving down illness and death from pneumonia and diarrhoea among young children. IVAC's new Pneumonia and Diarrhoea Progress Report shows that while countries are making gradual progress implementing interventions to treat and prevent pneumonia and diarrhoea, substantially more needs to be done. Vaccines are a cornerstone of intervention strategies, but they only work if the children in communities most in need are reached. We urge national governments, development partners and international agencies to commit to all strategies to reduce this preventable burden of disease.”