



Media Release

Date: 12/11/2018

PNEUMONIA TO KILL NEARLY 11 MILLION CHILDREN BY 2030

Pneumonia is on course to kill nearly 11 million children by 2030, new analysis conducted by Johns Hopkins University and Save the Children reveals.

The in-depth modelling, released on World Pneumonia Day (12 November), also shows that more than four million of these deaths – more than a third – could be easily averted with concerted action to improve rates of vaccination, treatment and nutrition.

Without action, the aid organisation's forecasts show Nigeria, India, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are likely to bear the highest burden of deaths.

Although pneumonia is reasonably common, it remains a potentially very serious condition, especially in young children and the elderly, with about six percent of those affected dying from the disease. Ministry of Health data shows that there were 767 deaths from the flu and pneumonia in New Zealand in 2015.

According to the Asthma and Respiratory Foundation of NZ, childhood death rates from pneumonia are 5.9 times higher for Māori children and 7.3 times higher for Pacific children than for other New Zealanders (non-Māori, non-Pacific, non-Asian). Of the 136 children who died between 2004 and 2013, 63 were Māori and 41 were Pacific.

However, if it is picked up early, most pneumonia cases can be managed successfully at home, avoiding the need for hospital admission and more intensive treatment.

Globally, though, the disease is the biggest infectious killer for children, killing more than malaria, diarrhoea and measles combined. Around 880,000 children, mostly under the age of two, died from the disease in 2016, the most recent year for which full data is available.

Save the Children CEO Heidi Coetzee said, *"It's appalling that close to a million children are dying every year from a disease that we have the knowledge and resources to defeat. Although vaccines and other preventative efforts are decreasing the burden of the disease, much more work is needed. Both in New Zealand and overseas those living in poor communities are at the highest risk of pneumonia. Every child, regardless of where they are born, deserves access to lifesaving vaccines and medicines.*

"There are no pink ribbons, global summits or marches for pneumonia. But for anyone who cares about justice for children and their access to essential healthcare, this forgotten killer should be the defining cause of our age."

Save the Children's forecasts are based on a model developed by researchers at Johns Hopkins University called the Lives Saved Tool (LiST).

They show nearly 11 million (10,865,728) children will die by 2030 on current trends, with the highest burden of deaths in Nigeria (1,730,000), India (1,710,000), Pakistan (706,000), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (635,000).

However, scaling up vaccination coverage to 90 per cent of children under the age of five could save 610,000 lives; providing cheap antibiotics could save 1.9 million; and ensuring children have good nutrition could save 2.5 million.

If all three overlapping interventions were carried out by 2030, the model suggests a total of 4.1 million deaths could be averted.

2030 is the target date for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include an ambitious global pledge to "end preventable child deaths" and achieve Universal Health Coverage.

To end preventable child deaths from diseases like pneumonia, Save the Children wants to see:

- The prices of major pneumonia vaccines dramatically lowered to allow more than 76 million infants to be immunised
- Governments of low-and middle-income countries prioritising building strong health and nutrition systems that reach the most marginalised
- Donor governments like New Zealand supporting countries to achieve Universal Health Coverage.

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Pneumonia content & case studies are available [here](#)

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- **Johns Hopkins University's Lives Saved Tool (LiST)** is designed to estimate lives saved from maternal and child health interventions. Rather than providing a simple linear projection, it estimates what the profile of child pneumonia deaths in 2030 will look like according to population risk factors such as malnutrition, vaccination rates and health care seeking. For this analysis, five projections have been performed (1) business as usual projections where the rates of progress of risk factors continue to progress at their historical trends until 2030; (2) Hib and PCV vaccination rates to follow Gavi's country-specific trends or 90% by 2030 (whichever is higher); (3) Reaching World Health Assembly targets for reductions in stunting and wasting and increases in breastfeeding; (4) Increasing oral antibiotics for pneumonia to 90% by 2030 and injectable antibiotics for neonatal infection to 90% by 2030; (5) combination of (2), (3) and (4).
- Data from the World Health Organisation's Global Health Observatory (GHO) shows pneumonia killed 880,000 children in 2016, accounting for approximately 16 per cent of under-five deaths globally.
- 49,115 children died from pneumonia in the DRC in 2016, according to the GHO.
- See Save the Children's [Fighting for Breath](#) report for more information about the charity's pneumonia campaign.
- Save the Children is a partner of the Every Breath Counts coalition, a public-private partnership which launched last year on World Pneumonia Day and aims to galvanise change in the countries with the highest burden of pneumonia deaths.

