

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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WHO/UNICEF launch new action plan against pneumonia, the leading killer of children

NEW YORK, 1 November 2009 – More than five million children could be saved over six years if a comprehensive plan to tackle pneumonia is adopted worldwide, according to UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO). The comprehensive plan, called the Global Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Pneumonia (GAPP) is being jointly launched by the two agencies at the Global Pneumonia Summit in New York City on Monday.

“Pneumonia is the leading cause of under age five mortality, killing more than 4,000 children every day,” said Ann M. Veneman, UNICEF Executive Director. “Effective interventions to reduce deaths caused by pneumonia must be used more widely and made more readily available for children at risk.”

Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General, WHO, said: “This action plan provides the strategy to prevent and control pneumonia, which today kills more children than any other illness. We know the strategy will work, and if it is applied in every high burden country, we will be able to prevent millions of deaths.”

The GAPP includes recommendations for action, sets out specific goals and targets, and provides an estimate of the cost and how many lives will be saved. The cost of implementing the new GAPP plan in the 68 high prevalence countries between now and 2015 is estimated at \$39 billion.

The plan aims to increase awareness of pneumonia as a major cause of death among children, and UNICEF and WHO are seeking support for its immediate implementation from national policy-makers, donor agencies and civil society.

The GAPP strategy has three elements:

- Protecting every child, by providing an environment where the risk of pneumonia is low. Promoting healthy practices, such as exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, adequate nutrition, and handwashing, will play an important role;
- Preventing children from contracting pneumonia, through increased penetration of related vaccines, including measles vaccine and pneumococcal conjugate vaccine;
- Treating children who become ill with pneumonia with the right care and antibiotics, including at the community level.

Death due to childhood pneumonia is strongly linked to malnutrition, poverty and inadequate access to health care. Two key recommendations in the strategy concern the strengthening of health systems, and improving access to care by empowering community-level workers.

Following the launch of the plan, the Global Task Force on pneumonia, comprising UNICEF, WHO, other UN agencies, NGOs and academic institutions, will coordinate efforts to support its implementation, particularly in countries with a high burden of pneumonia.

To download a copy of the new pneumonia plan (**WHICH IS UNDER THE SAME EMBARGO TIMES AS THE PRESS RELEASE**), go to the following password-protected site:

www.who.int/child_adolescent_health/documents/fch_cah_nch_09_04

Username: media_access

Password: gapp23tykr

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About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 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 see UNICEF's global website at <http://www.unicef.org/>

UNICEF video and high-resolution photography for media organizations is available at: <http://www.thenewsmarket.com/unicef>

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