**9 million children could die in a decade unless world acts on pneumonia, leading agencies warn**

*Malnutrition, air pollution and lack of access to vaccines and antibiotics among the drivers of preventable deaths from pneumonia—which last year killed a child every 39 seconds*

**BARCELONA, 29 January 2020 —** Boosting efforts to fight pneumonia could avert nearly 9 million child deaths from pneumonia and other major diseases, a new analysis has found ahead of the first ever global forum on childhood pneumonia in Barcelona (January 29-31).

According to a modelling by Johns Hopkins University, scaling up pneumonia treatment and prevention services can save the lives of 3.2 million children under the age of five. It would also create ‘a ripple effect’ that would prevent 5.7 million extra child deaths from other major childhood diseases at the same time, underscoring the need for integrated health services.

Pneumonia is caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi, and leaves children fighting for breath as their lungs fill with pus and fluid. It is the biggest single killer of children, claiming the lives of 800,000 children last year, or 1 child every 39 seconds. Although pneumonia can be prevented with vaccines and is easily treated with $1 antibiotics if properly diagnosed, tens of millions of children are still unvaccinated – and one in three children with symptoms do not receive essential medical care.

Child deaths from pneumonia are concentrated in the world’s poorest countries and it is the most deprived and marginalised children who suffer the most. Forecasts show 6.3 million children under the age of five could die from pneumonia between 2020 and 2030, on current trends. Over the next decade, deaths are likely to be highest in Nigeria (1.4 million), India (880,000), the Democratic Republic of Congo (350,000) and Ethiopia (280,000).

Health interventions aimed at improving nutrition, providing antibiotics and increasing vaccine coverage, boosting breastfeeding rates – key measures that reduce the risk of children dying from pneumonia – would also prevent millions of child deaths from diseases like diarrhoea (2.1 million), sepsis (1.3 million), and measles (280,000).

**Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of UNICEF, said:**

“*If we are serious about saving the lives of children, we have to get serious about fighting pneumonia. As the current coronavirus outbreak shows, this means improving timely detection and prevention. It means making the right diagnosis and prescribing the right treatment. It also means addressing the major causes of pneumonia deaths like malnutrition, lack of access to vaccines and antibiotics, and tackling the more difficult challenge of air pollution*.”

Outdoor air pollution contributes to 17.5 per cent – or nearly one in five – pneumonia deaths among children under five worldwide, according to a study by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME-GBD). Household pollution from the indoor use of solid cooking fuels contributes to an additional 195,000 (29.4 per cent) deaths.

On January 29-31, the nine leading health and children’s organisations – ISGlobal, Save the Children, UNICEF, Every Breath Counts, “la Caixa” Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID,Unitaid and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance – are hosting world leaders at the [Global Forum on Childhood Pneumonia](https://stoppneumonia.org/) in Barcelona, the first international forum on childhood pneumonia.

Among the announcements to be made at the forum include a more affordable, PCV vaccine from the Serum Institute of India and political commitments from governments in high-burden countries to develop national strategies to reduce pneumonia deaths.