Fighting for Breath in Nigeria
A CALL TO ACTION TO STOP CHILDREN DYING FROM PNEUMONIA

Biggest killer, yet forgotten
Pneumonia is the world’s leading infectious killer of children, claiming the lives of more than 800,000 children under the age of five every year, more than 2,000 every day.

It is a shocking demonstration of pervasive health inequities disproportionately affecting the most deprived and marginalised children in low- and middle income countries. It represents a violation of children’s right to survival and development, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet pneumonia has been largely forgotten on global and national health agendas. We can and must change this.

Poverty and inequality aid and abet pneumonia deaths
Progress to address the number of children dying from pneumonia isn’t fast enough or fair enough. Global/regional/national averages mask huge inequalities in countries. It is the poorest children who are most at risk because of high rates of malnutrition, and lack of access to basic quality health services for vaccinations, and diagnosis & treatment of common childhood illnesses. As a result, the poorest children are almost twice as likely to die before their 5th birthday compared to the richest. Innovations that could save hundreds of thousands of lives each year are not reaching children with the greatest need.

It is possible to combat pneumonia
It is possible to deliver the necessary solutions to combat pneumonia to all children. It is possible through Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and equitable access to quality primary health care to prevent, diagnose and treat pneumonia. It is possible through better immunisation coverage to protect children from some of the leading causes of pneumonia. It is possible through good nutrition to help their bodies to fight off infections and respond to treatment, as well as to prevent underlying causes of pneumonia. It is possible through improved water, hygiene & sanitation, and reductions in air pollution to help address risk factors that can cause pneumonia. It is possible through ensuring access to integrated service delivery and life-saving low cost antibiotics at the community level and strengthening the availability and quality of referral level care, to combat pneumonia and save lives.

2020 is the year to act
There are clear actions that governments and the global community can and must take to improve child survival. The progress made so far is not enough, and comprehensively addressing pneumonia is key for child survival. With the impetus provided by the recently concluded UN High-Level Meeting on UHC in September 2019, The Global Forum on Childhood Pneumonia in January 2020, the Gavi Replenishment Conference in June 2020 and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit in December 2020 should all be used as key moments for governments to make strong commitments to accelerate progress on combatting pneumonia.

With just ten years left to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – and only five for the Integrated Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) targets – now is the time to act. We need concerted action to improve policies, investment, innovations, and scale up evidence-based interventions, if we are to leave no child behind and to save lives. Not only is combatting pneumonia possible, it is a must – a must for every child to be able to fulfil their right to survive and thrive.
Nigeria spotlight

Regional inequalities in child mortality in Nigeria

HIGHEST RISK FACTORS FOR CHILD PNEUMONIA DEATHS IN NIGERIA, 2017

- 51% caused by child wasting
- 26% caused by indoor air pollution from solid fuels
- 20% caused by outdoor air pollution

PNEUMONIA RELATED UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY

GLOBAL TARGET

3 per 1000 live births is the target pneumonia mortality rate for under-fives by 2025, as envisaged under the Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD).

NIGERIA STATUS

- 22 per 1000 live births, under five mortality rate due to pneumonia in 2018.
- 19% of child deaths were due to pneumonia in 2018, and it was the biggest killer of children under-five in 2017.

Pneumonia killed more than 162,000 children under-five in 2018 – more than 18 children every hour.

2% is the average annual rate of reduction in pneumonia mortality between 2000–2018, and at the same rate, Nigeria is expected to reach the 2025 GAPPD target later than 2050.
Health system strengthening to deliver strong primary health care and UHC to combat pneumonia

The UHC Service Coverage Index is a measure of SDG indicator 3.8.1, which is a composite of essential health services. Countries should strive towards achieving 100% coverage to ensure health care for all citizens. To progress towards UHC, coverage of quality essential health services needs to be expanded with an emphasis on reducing inequities and strengthening health care facilities, to improve the quality of primary health care services. In Nigeria, the coverage of essential health services was just 42% in 2017. In addition, the proportion of children with pneumonia symptoms who are taken for healthcare is the indicator for ‘child treatment’ under the UHC Service Coverage Index. In Nigeria it was 73% in 2018, but this includes pharmacies which do not necessarily provide clinical services.

To build strong health systems, increase coverage and deliver UHC, Nigeria needs to increase domestic public health expenditure towards a target of 5% of GDP, prioritising spending at the primary health care level. It would be ideal for Nigeria to raise revenue for health systems in an equitable way through progressive taxation and remove out-of-pocket payments to accessing health and nutrition services, such as user fees, at least for vulnerable populations and priority services. The more Nigeria continues to rely heavily on out-of-pocket payments, the harder it will be to achieve UHC.

Strong and equitable health systems are needed to adequately prevent, diagnose and treat pneumonia, and provide children with their basic human right to good-quality healthcare. UHC – where all children and their family have access to health and nutrition services, vaccinations and the medicines they need, without facing financial hardship – represents that right in action.

GLOBAL TARGETS ON HEALTH FINANCING

$86 is the minimum recommended government spend/person/year to provide essential health services as per WHO recommendations.

5% is the minimum recommended government spend on health as % of GDP as per WHO recommendations.

57% of government health expenditure should be on primary-level healthcare services as per WHO recommendations, as 90% of all health needs can be met at the primary health care level.

The SDG targets for large out of pocket (OOP) expenditure should not be more than

10% and to avert catastrophic OOP expenditure it should not be more than

25% of total household expenditure or income.

NIGERIA STATUS

$10 spent by the government on health per person in 2016.

5% of the government’s budget spent on health in 2016.

0.5% of GDP spent on health by the government in 2016.

..% of the government’s budget spent on primary health care Data not available

75% of total health expenditure was out-of-pocket in 2016.
PROTECT children by establishing good health practices from birth

**SDG 2.2:** By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under-five.

40% reduction in stunting (height for age) in under-five children and reduce and maintain childhood wasting (weight for age) to less than 5% as per the 2025 targets set in the 2012 World Health Assembly Resolution.

**Wasting**
- 7% is the wasting rate for under-five children in 2018.
- 8% is the wasting rate for under-five children in rural households in 2018.
- 5% is the wasting rate for under-five children in urban households in 2018.

**Stunting**
- 37% is the stunting rate in 2018.
- 46% is the stunting rate among under-five children in rural households in 2018.
- 27% is the stunting rate among under-five children in urban households in 2018.

To remain on track to achieve SDG 2 in 2030, Nigeria needs to reduce stunting rates to 21% by 2025.

The stunting rate among children in rural households is more than 1 ½ times higher than among children in urban households.

**Exclusive Breastfeeding**
- 29% is the exclusive breastfeeding rate in 2017.
- 16% is the exclusive breastfeeding rate among babies in the poorest households in 2017.
- 35% is the exclusive breastfeeding rate among babies in the richest households in 2017.
PREVENT pneumonia in children by addressing underlying causes

**SDG 3.2:** End preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births by 2030.

90% national and at least 80% district or equivalent administrative unit coverage for vaccination by 2020 as per the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP)

**DTP3** (Diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis), **Hib3** (Haemophilus influenzae type b) and **PCV3** (Pneumococcal Conjugate) vaccines included in the national immunisation programme.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Nigeria Status</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sub-national Status</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>57% DTP3 vaccine coverage among 1-year-olds in 2018.</td>
<td>Pentavalent vaccine (Penta3) coverage among 1-year-olds in 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57% Hib3 vaccine coverage among 1-year-olds in 2018.</td>
<td>90% or more in States such as Lagos and Ekiti while it is as low as 7% in Sokoto and 11% in Zamfara.</td>
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<tr>
<td>57% PCV3 coverage among 1-year-olds in 2018.</td>
<td>PCV3 coverage among 1-year-olds in 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>57%</td>
<td>90% or more in States such as Lagos and Ekiti while it is as low as 6% in Sokoto and 9% in Zamfara.</td>
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**SDG 6.1:** Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030.

**SDG 6.2:** Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women, girls and those in vulnerable situations by 2030.

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<td>4% People using safely managed drinking water services in 2017.</td>
<td>3% rural &amp; 5% urban people using safely managed drinking water services in 2017.</td>
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<tr>
<td>42% People using at least basic sanitation services in 2018.</td>
<td>38% rural &amp; 50% urban people using at least basic sanitation services in 2018.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21% People with basic hand washing facilities at home in 2018.</td>
<td>18% rural &amp; 27% urban people with basic hand washing facilities at home in 2018.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24% People practicing open defecation in 2018.</td>
<td>30% rural &amp; 11% urban people practicing open defecation in 2018.</td>
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**SDG 7:** 100% access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030.

**SDG 3.9:** Substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals; air, water and soil pollution and contamination by 2030.

10 Micro grams per cubic metre of air (μg/m3) should be the mean annual exposure to Fine Particulate Matter (PM_{2.5}) as per WHO Air Quality Guidelines.

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<tr>
<td>7% people with primary reliance on clean fuels and technologies in 2017.</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
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<tr>
<td>72 micro grams per cubic metre of air (μg/m) is the mean annual exposure to PM_{2.5} pollution in urban settings in 2017.</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
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**DIAGNOSE & TREAT children who become ill with pneumonia**

**SDG 3.12:** Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States.

44.5 per 10,000 people is the minimum number of skilled health workers required to deliver quality health services as per WHO recommendations. The estimated shortage of health workers is 18 million by 2030.

### Nigeria Status

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<th>Health workers</th>
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<td>4 doctors per 10,000 people &amp; 15 nurses and midwives per 10,000 people in 2013.</td>
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**Sub-national Status**

**Data not available**

YES – Nigeria has a National Task-Shifting Policy.

YES & NO – Many States have not adopted the task-shifting Policy, although Lagos, Kaduna and Gombe are a few that have done so.

YES – There is a National Guideline for Community health workers to dispense antibiotics.

YES – Community health workers have been mandated to dispense Amoxycillin Dispersible Tablets (DT) 250 mg.

### ICCM (Universal Integrated Community Case Management) to prioritise the most deprived and marginalised, removing financial and non-financial barriers to access.

**Nigeria Status**

YES – Nigeria has National IMCI and ICCM Guidelines.

YES – Amoxycillin DT 250 mg is on the essential medicines list.

**Sub-national Status**

YES – All 37 States follow the IMCI and ICCM Guidelines.

YES – All 37 States have ensured that training curriculums for community health workers (CHWs) include how to dispense Amoxycillin DT 250 mg.

### Oxygen levels in children should be monitored by trained CHWs (community health workers) who can refer them in time to primary and secondary health facilities which have oxygen supply.

**Nigeria Status**

YES & NO – As per the ‘National Strategy for the Scale-up of Medical Oxygen in Health Facilities 2017-2022’, CHWs are mandated to use pulse oximeters, but this has not been rolled out yet.

YES – LGA level primary health care centres should have medical oxygen as per the ‘National Strategy for the Scale-up of Medical Oxygen in Health Facilities 2017-2022’.

**Sub-national Status**

NO – None of the 37 States are yet to mandate CHWs to use pulse oximeters.

YES – In all 37 States LGA level primary health care centres should have medical oxygen, but many do not due to supply issues.

Of the secondary and tertiary health facilities in 8 States which were assessed in 2016, only 55% provided functional medical oxygen therapy and 11% provided pulse oximeters. In PHCs, availability of medical oxygen and pulse oximetry was even lower.

### Care seeking behaviour

**Nigeria Status**

Only 24% children with pneumonia symptoms were taken to a health facility in 2017.

**Sub-national Status**

23% of children under-five with pneumonia symptoms, from the poorest households, were taken to a health facility in 2017.

28% of children under-five with pneumonia symptoms, from the richest households, were taken to a health facility in 2017.
A Global Call to Action on Childhood Pneumonia

1. **Develop pneumonia control strategies** as part of wider plans for universal health coverage and commit to reducing child pneumonia deaths to fewer than three per 1,000 live births, the target set by the Integrated Global Action Plan Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD).

2. **Strengthen quality primary health care and action on pneumonia** as part of national multi-sectoral plans and through integrated strategies (including nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and air pollution), including at community level, focusing on the most deprived and marginalised children.

3. **Increase domestic government investment in health and nutrition** (to at least 5% of GDP on health) and ensure that increased spending improves access to child health and nutrition services, including by removing user fees, addressing non-financial barriers to accessing care, and prioritising primary health services.

4. **Improve health governance** by ensuring accountability, transparency and inclusiveness in planning, budgeting and expenditure monitoring, including for pneumonia control strategies.

5. **Accelerate vaccination coverage** by supporting Gavi’s 2020 replenishment and ensuring the investment drives more equitable vaccination coverage and improves vaccine affordability.

6. **Enhance overseas development assistance** by increasing allocations to child health services and advancing the achievement of universal health coverage (aligned with national priorities and plans), including through pledges as part of Gavi replenishment and Nutrition for Growth.

7. **Engage the private sector to improve access** to affordable, quality vaccines, diagnostic tools, new antibiotics, medicines and medical oxygen, especially for the most deprived and marginalised children.

8. **Measure and report progress in achieving universal health coverage** to build stronger health systems which deliver quality primary health care and reduce child deaths, including from pneumonia, as well as against SDG child survival and GAPPD targets.

9. **Prioritise research, development and innovation** to improve access to the most affordable and cost-effective pneumonia prevention, diagnosis, referral and treatment technologies and services.

10. **Champion multi-sectoral partnerships** between the child health and nutrition communities and the broader infection control, clean air, water, sanitation and hygiene, and development financing communities.
The partnership to combat pneumonia

Save the Children, UNICEF and Every Breath Counts Coalition are working in partnership to fight one of the greatest – and gravest – health challenges facing children around the world – childhood pneumonia. The partnership will galvanise support to put pneumonia on the global health agenda; stimulate national action; and mobilise the donor community to ensure that we achieve the SDG goal on child survival and the Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) target of three child pneumonia deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030.

References:


2. Under-Five Mortality: United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME) (2019); Save the Children’s Child Inequality Tracker; MICS 2016 -2017; Mortality rates are calculated for the 10-year-period preceding the DHS survey; Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018

3. Risk Factors for Pneumonia: The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Global Burden of Disease


5. Health Systems Strengthening: WHO/World Bank UHC Coverage Index; Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018

6. Health Financing: WHO Global Health Expenditure database

7. Sub-national Status: GRID, Save the Children’s Child Inequality Tracker; Poorest (richest) refers to poorest (richest) 20% of households as defined by most recent household survey.

8. Nutrition: Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018; 2025 target calculated based on WHO methodology


10. Immunisation: WHO/UNICEF estimates of national immunization coverage (WUENIC); Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018; GRID, Save the Children’s Child Inequality Tracker

11. WASH: Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) 2017; National Outcome Routine Mapping, Nigeria 2018

12. Air Pollution: WHO Global Health Observatory - SDG 7.1; World Development Indicators (based on Brauer, M. et al. 2017), World Bank


14. ICCM: WHO Essential Medicines and Health Products Information Portal; National Guidelines on IMCI and ICCM; National Community Health Workers (CHWs) Training Curriculum


16. Care Seeking Behaviour: Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) 2017

Photo credit: Save the Children
A mother and child, photographed during a visit to the Dusuman Health Clinic, Outpatient Therapeutic Unit, near Maiduguri, Nigeria.