



Save the Children

# FIGHTING FOR BREATH IN SIERRA LEONE

A call to action on  
childhood pneumonia

## WHY ARE CHILDREN DYING OF PNEUMONIA AROUND THE WORLD?

- A child who is severely malnourished is four times more likely to die from pneumonia. Globally, 52 million children suffer from wasting, and they face grave health risks.
- Pneumococcal vaccines (PCVs) could prevent most bacterial pneumonia cases, but 170 million children under two in developing countries are unimmunised.
- One-third of children with pneumonia-like symptoms do not seek appropriate care.
- Antibiotics which could prevent 70% of all pneumonia deaths, costing just \$0.50 on average, are frequently not accessible and often unavailable.
- Poor children are most at risk from pneumonia but health systems disproportionately provide for wealthier children.

**Pneumonia claims the lives of more children around the world than any other infectious disease. The vast majority of those killed by pneumonia are poor and living in low and middle income countries.**

920,000 children under five died of pneumonia in 2015. That's two fatalities every minute of every day - more than diarrhoea, malaria and measles combined. Most of the deaths happen in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Over 80% occur among children under two, many of them in the first weeks of life. This is a disease that leaves children gasping for breath and fighting for life.

### Strengthening Primary Health Care (PHC)

Every nation should make it a priority to ensure strong, accessible primary health care systems for all communities. For effective prevention, early diagnosis, and treatment of pneumonia, health care systems must be free for patients. They must have trained community health workers; adequately supplied facilities; cold chain and transport for vaccines so everyone can have access to immunisation; and referral systems must be swift for children with severe

pneumonia. Health plans should also include interventions to improve the overall health of children. Their vulnerability to pneumonia can be reduced by combating undernutrition, by protecting, promoting, and supporting exclusive breastfeeding, and by encouraging care seeking behaviour.

### Progressing towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) to combat pneumonia

Pneumonia cannot be treated in isolation. Tackling pneumonia requires a strong and accessible health system that reaches the most disadvantaged children. Governments need to make quality primary health care for every community the foundation and priority for progressing towards UHC. All countries, irrespective of income level, can and should make progress towards UHC; expanding reach, services, and the extent of financial protection for the poorest people/families. The path countries take will differ but all must ensure equitable access without discrimination. Pneumonia prevention, management and treatment should be part of an integrated maternal and child health continuum of care which can be delivered by a strong PHC system that should be the foundation and priority for UHC.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SIERRA LEONE

- Fully implement the National Health Strategy 2016-2020 and adequately resource the Basic Package of Essential Health Services to ensure that diagnosis and treatment is accessible for pneumonia and other childhood illnesses.
- Ensure community health workers are adequately trained, supervised, mentored, and coached to deliver quality 'Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illness' (IMNCI) services at the national, district and community levels.
- Improve the procurement and supply of life saving commodities at all levels and further strengthen the expanded program on immunization (EPI) and supportive cold chain systems to ensure effective implementation of the open vial multi-dose vaccine policy.
- Reduce vulnerability to pneumonia by promoting the importance of healthy nutrition practices, breast feeding, clean cooking fuels, toilet use, hand washing, safe drinking water, and sanitation.
- Develop a National Health Financing strategy which will expedite the roll out of the Sierra Leone Health Insurance Scheme by ensuring adequate funding for implementation and progressing towards universal health coverage.

# KEY PNEUMONIA FACTS FOR SIERRA LEONE<sup>1</sup>

Pneumonia killed  
**3,705**  
children in 2015 – more than  
10 children per day.

**83,186**  
children under two are not  
immunised with PCV in 2016.

If current trends continue,  
**1,273** children will die  
from pneumonia in 2030.

## UHC TO COMBAT PNEUMONIA

### HEALTH OUTCOMES

**25** per 1000 live births is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target rate for under five deaths by 2030.



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



### NUTRITION

As per the 2025 targets set in the 2012 World Health Assembly Resolution, the vital steps towards ending malnutrition by 2030 are:

**40%** reduction in stunting in children under five.



**5%** or less wasting prevalence in children under five.



**50%** exclusive breastfeeding rate for the first 6 months.

### IMMUNISATION

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



**Hib** (Haemophilus influenzae type B) vaccine and **PCV** included in the national immunisation programme.



### PAYING FOR HEALTHCARE

**\$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.



## SPOTLIGHT ON SIERRA LEONE<sup>2</sup>

**114** per 1000 live births, under five mortality rate in Sierra Leone in 2016. Poor children are **1.3 times** more likely to die before the age of five than wealthy children.

**17** per 1000 live births, under five mortality rate in Sierra Leone due to pneumonia in 2015.

**14%** of all under five mortality is due to pneumonia in 2015.

**29%** stunting rate in 2014. To remain on track to achieve SDG 2 in 2030, Sierra Leone needs to reduce stunting rates to **17%** by 2025.

**5%** severe wasting prevalence in children under five in 2014.

**59%** exclusive breastfeeding rate in 2014.

**84%** national rate in 2016 based on Penta3 coverage.

**72%** is the coverage rate in Bo District and it is **76%** in Western Area.

**84%** Hib vaccine coverage (Penta 3) among 1 year olds in 2016.

**84%** PCV3 coverage among 1 year olds in 2016.

**\$15** spent by the government on health per person in 2014.

**11%** of the government's budget spent on health in 2014.

**2%** of GDP spent on health by the government in 2014.

**61%** of total health expenditure is out-of-pocket in 2014.

<sup>1</sup> **Key facts:** <http://www.who.int/gho/en/>; The number of deaths in 2030 "if current trends continue" is the annual rate of change between 2000 and 2015, applied to the next 15 years. This does not consider the introduction of PCV3.

<sup>2</sup> **Health outcomes:** <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.525?lang=en>; <https://tinyurl.com/yc54dua5>; data@unicef.org; **Nutrition:** <https://www.medbox.org/countries/sierra-leone-national-nutrition-survey-2014/preview?q=>; **Immunisation:** <http://apps.who.int/gho/data/node.main.A824?lang=en>; Annual Health Sector Performance Report 2016, MOH, Sierra Leone;

**Paying for health care:** <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/health/> & <http://apps.who.int/nha/database/ViewData/Indicators/en>