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ASIA EDITION

Pneumonia kills a 5-year-old child every 30 secs: UN

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Singapore: Pneumonia remains the single biggest killer of children under the age of five globally, claiming the lives of more than one million girls and boys every year. However, the good news is that pneumonia deaths are preventable.

As countries mark World Pneumonia Day on November 12, the WHO, UNICEF and the GAVI Alliance are highlighting essential actions that can help end child deaths from this disease.

"Every 30 seconds, a child younger than five years dies of pneumonia. This is a great shame as we know what it takes to prevent children from dying of this illness," says Dr Mickey Chopra, chief of health, UNICEF. "Tackling pneumonia doesn't necessarily need complicated solutions."

The theme of World Pneumonia Day 2013 was "Innovate to End Child Pneumonia". Recognizing that child mortality cannot be addressed in a vacuum, but only through integrated efforts, in April 2013, the WHO and UNICEF released an Integrated Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD).

The GAPPD presents an innovative framework bringing together prevention, protection and control of both pneumonia and diarrhoea, two of the world's leading killers of children under 5 - to make more efficient and effective use of scarce health resources.

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"The GAVI Alliance is helping to accelerate the fight against pneumonia by increasing access to pneumococcal vaccines, thanks to GAVI's innovative Advance Market Commitment (AMC), but also to the 5-in-1 pentavalent vaccine which protects against Haemophilus influenzae type b, another major cause of pneumonia," says Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of the GAVI Alliance.

"To achieve the vision and goals of the integrated plan, to end preventable deaths from pneumonia and diarrhoea in the next generation, the children of the world need to see political will, coordinated efforts, and increased resources at the global and national levels to fight these stubborn killers," says Dr Elizabeth Mason, director of WHO's Department of Maternal, Newborn,

Child and Adolescent Health.