

24 January 2010 - Up to 1 million children's lives could be saved every year if two new vaccines to tackle pneumonia and diarrhoea were widely available in the developing world.

This year, for the first time, babies and children in Kenya, Sierra Leone, Yemen and Guyana will be immunised against pneumonia through their public health service. Tens of thousands of young lives could potentially be saved.

But now there's a real danger that the global immunisation drive could stall because of a looming funding crisis.

Millions of lives in peril

"Just when we are on the brink of a breakthrough against these two major child killers, the cash is running out. Without it, children will continue to die on a scale, and from causes, that would be unimaginable in Britain," warned Justin Forsyth, Chief Executive of Save the Children.

"It's not just the new vaccines that are at stake. Millions of children are already missing out on even the most basic immunisations against illnesses like whooping cough and tetanus. With more funds, many more of the poorest and most marginalised kids can be reached."

Since 2000, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisations (GAVI) has raised funds – including through issuing innovative 'vaccine' bonds on the capital markets – enabling it to strike deals with pharmaceutical companies for lower-priced vaccines to be sold to the developing world.

An estimated 288 million children have already been reached. But now, to bridge the immunisation gap - and save millions of children's lives - £500 million a year is needed over the next five years.

Call for a new deal

Save the Children is challenging G8 nations and other rich countries to pledge the cash – only a tiny fraction of that spent bailing out the world's financial system – at a special conference to be hosted by the UK government in London in June.

"We need to step up our fight against these diseases, in the same way we tackled smallpox and polio. It's completely unacceptable in this day and age that so many children are dying from something as simple as diarrhoea," said Justin.

"Vaccines aren't a magic bullet; children still need access to clean water, good sanitation, and decent health services to prevent and treat childhood diseases. But they can help us make real progress by protecting – rather than treating – children from disease."

In the most ambitious global push against pneumonia to date, GAVI has approved the roll-out of the latest, most effective vaccines to 19 countries – but 26 others have not yet been guaranteed funding.

"Without the specially subsidised rates, many developing world governments won't be able to afford to pay for the pneumonia and diarrhoea vaccines," added Justin. "That's why GAVI needs to be properly resourced over the next five years if the UN target for reducing child mortality is to be reached."

Source: [Save the Children](#)