

BANGKOK, 11 November 2010 - Efforts to treat and prevent pneumonia are falling short in the 15 countries responsible for three-quarters of the world's annual deaths from the disease, according to a "report card" issued by the US-based International Vaccine Access Center (IVAC) at Johns Hopkins University.

Pneumonia kills more children under five every year – 1.6 million – than measles, HIV/AIDS and malaria combined, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The report's lead author and IVAC's executive director, Orin Levine, said unimplemented policies were at fault. "We have safe effective proven interventions that can decrease under-five deaths by two-thirds, but they are simply not reaching the children who need them the most."

In its 2009 Global Action Plan for Prevention & Control of Pneumonia, the UN Children's Fund and WHO calculated that reducing indoor air pollution, improving child nutrition, vaccination coverage and treatment could reduce deaths caused by pneumonia.

"The beauty of pneumonia is that interventions are at hand. The action that it will take to get things moving are often the basics of public health - supply of drugs and vaccines and people to deliver them. It's not rocket science holding us back from saving millions of children," said Levine.

Below are highlights from IVAC's report, which scored anti-pneumonia efforts in 15 countries. Listed from the highest to the lowest number of reported pneumonia deaths annually, they are: India, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Angola, Kenya, Niger, Bangladesh, Uganda, Tanzania and Burkina Faso.

- Afghanistan scored highest (61 percent) and Nigeria the lowest (23 percent) based on how many people were reached with treatment and prevention.
- Children in the top 15 affected countries are up to 400 times more likely to die from pneumonia than children in the US.
- Since the Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunisation (GAVI) introduced the pneumococcal vaccine two years ago, half the eligible most endemic countries have applied for support to roll out the vaccine.
- Six out of 10 women in Uganda reported exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of their child's life – reducing the child's vulnerability to pneumonia infections – versus fewer than 5 percent of women in Niger.
- Almost 70 percent of children with pneumonia in Pakistan are taken to a health centre and half of all infections are treated with antibiotics; in Ethiopia, barely 20 percent of pneumonia patients visit a health facility, with some 5 percent receiving medication.

Source: [IRIN](#)