



International Union Against
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease

Health solutions for the poor

PRESS RELEASE

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The Union applauds greater awareness of child pneumonia— but funds are still lacking

World Pneumonia Day is 12 November 2011

10 November 2011/ Paris – As part of the Global Coalition Against Child Pneumonia, **The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)** applauds the increasing awareness of pneumonia as the number one infectious killer of children under five. Somewhere in the world, a child dies every 20 seconds from this treatable disease.

*“This is the third World Pneumonia Day, and clearly there is more awareness of the millions of needless deaths it causes each year”, says **Dr Nils E. Billo, Executive Director of The Union.** “This is an important first step, but now funding needs to follow”.*

In 2001, The Union received a \$2-million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for a Child Lung Health Project in Malawi. This project resulted in a model for delivering standardised case management that reduced case fatalities for severe/very severe pneumonia in children under five years of age by more than 55% by 2005 and saved 4,500 lives. The project was expanded with support from the Scottish Government then was taken on by the Malawi Ministry of Health and Population. The case fatality rate has continued to fall in the intervening years, with many more children’s lives being saved since the project was totally incorporated into the Malawi MOH health services.

“Despite the demonstrated success of this model, which not only saved many children’s lives, but has also proved sustainable, we have had only limited success in interesting donors who might help low-income countries replicate the model”, says Dr Billo. Subsequent pilot projects were carried out in Benin, Sudan and China with funding from the World Bank, but additional proposals have not found support.

“The death of millions of children from a disease that can be treated cheaply and effectively with widely available drugs is unacceptable”, says Dr Billo. “Although vaccines exist, the ones currently available cannot prevent all pneumonias in children and access to them is limited for many poor populations”.

“The Union is dedicated to finding health solutions for the poor – but in this case, the challenge is to ensure that the existing solutions reach the people who need them. From our point of view, World Pneumonia Day will have succeeded when it is no longer necessary to have such a day”.

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About The Union

The mission of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) is to bring innovation, expertise, solutions and support to address health challenges in low- and middle-income populations. With nearly 10,000 members and subscribers from 150 countries, The Union has its headquarters in Paris and offices serving the Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America and South-East Asia regions. Its scientific departments focus on tuberculosis and HIV, lung health and non-communicable diseases, tobacco control and research. **Learn more at www.theunion.org**