



Hundreds of infants in Afghanistan received their first shots against pneumococcal disease today targeting the country's biggest child killer – pneumonia

Kabul, 7 December, 2013 - As part of the Government of Afghanistan's ongoing efforts to improve the health of the country's future generations, H.E. Hamid Karzai, President of Afghanistan, announced the introduction of the lifesaving pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) for all infants under two years of age.

With the support of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, the Ministry of Public Health, will introduce PCV into the routine Expanded Programme on Immunization and the vaccine will be available for free at all health facilities.

About 30 000 children under five in Afghanistan die because of pneumonia and it is estimated that about 150 000 children are affected by pneumonia each year. PCV will protect children from this and other diseases and is expected to significantly reduce infant mortality in the country.

"Preventing epidemic diseases through vaccination is a cheap and effective way of protecting our children against these illnesses," said Dr Suraya Dalil, the Minister of Public Health. "By vaccinating children regularly we can reduce child mortality in Afghanistan," she added.

"While great progress has been made in recent years, Afghanistan still has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the world," said Karin Hulshof, Regional Director, UNICEF South Asia. "The introduction of PCV in Afghanistan is a very significant milestone in our joint efforts to

protect the future generations of this country," she added.

"Vaccines are one of history's great and most cost-effective public health success stories, they give children a chance to grow up healthy, go to school and improve their life prospects. It is critically important that parents make sure their children receive all doses of the recommended vaccines," said Dr. Rik Peepkorn, WHO Afghanistan Representative. "WHO will continue its technical and financial support for the routine immunization program to ensure all children are vaccinated," he added.

"Afghanistan is taking a big step towards securing a healthier future for its children," said Dr Seth Berkley, CEO of the GAVI Alliance. "The addition of pneumococcal vaccine to the childhood immunization package will help protect the lives of the children who represent the country's future."

It is worth mentioning that this vaccine is being implemented in three rounds, at 6 weeks, 10 weeks and 14 weeks of the life of a child by injection in muscle that prevents the child lifelong against various diseases, including pneumonia, meningitis and otitis. The effectiveness of this vaccine has been determined at 80%–97%.

Saturday 17th of May 2025 11:00:15 AM