
Prelims and Mains focus: about the report and its findings; about the global forum on childhood pneumonia, about Pneumonia

News: A report on under-five mortality was released ahead of the first-ever global forum on childhood pneumonia in Barcelona from January 29 to 31.

Background

- Deprived and marginalized children in the world’s poorest countries are most affected by the killer disease.

- Current trends forecast that 6.3 million children under- five could die from the infection between 2020 and 2030 with the highest number of deaths predicted to be in Nigeria, with 1.4 million; India 880,000; the Democratic Republic of Congo 350,000; and Ethiopia 280,000.

Key findings of the report

- Fourteen per cent of under-five deaths in India — approximately 1,27,000 deaths annually — happen due to pneumonia. In 2013, this figure was about 1,78,000.

- It is estimated that half of these deaths are in the northern belt of the country. The current pneumonia mortality rate is five per 1,000 live births and the target is to reduce this to less than three by 2025.

- Outdoor air pollution contributes to 17.5 per cent — or nearly one in five —pneumonia deaths among children under five worldwide, according to a study by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

- Household pollution from the indoor use of solid cooking fuels contributes to
an additional 1,95,000 (29.4 per cent) deaths.

Tackling Pneumonia

- According to a new scientific model produced by Johns Hopkins University, in the United States, scaling up pneumonia treatment and prevention services can save the lives of 3.2 million children under the age of five the world over.

- It would also create ‘a ripple effect’ that would prevent 5.7 million extra child deaths from other major childhood diseases at the same time, underscoring need for integrated health services.

- As the current coronavirus outbreak shows, tackling pneumonia means improving timely detection and prevention. It means making the right diagnosis and prescribing the right treatment. It also means addressing the major causes of pneumonia deaths like malnutrition, lack of access to vaccines and antibiotics, and tackling the more difficult challenge of air pollution.

- According to World Health Organisation (WHO), the benefits of implementing key reduction-risk measures – such as improving nutrition, providing antibiotics and increasing vaccine coverage – would be many, including preventing the deaths of 2.1 million children from diarrhoea, 1.3 million from sepsis and another 280,000 from measles.

About Pneumonia

- Pneumonia is caused by bacteria, viruses or fungi, and leaves children fighting for breath as their lungs fill with puss and fluid.

- The current coronavirus epidemic which began in China, causes pneumonia and other respiratory diseases in patients.

- Pneumonia is the biggest single killer of children worldwide and claimed 800,000 last year, or one child every 39 seconds.
• Although some types of pneumonia can be easily prevented with vaccines and treated with low-cost antibiotics, tens of millions of children remain unvaccinated and one-in-three children with symptoms do not receive medical care.

About the Global Forum on Childhood Pneumonia

• The first-ever global forum on childhood pneumonia kicked off on Wednesday in Barcelona, Spain, and will include discussions on a more affordable pneumonia vaccine and political commitments from governments in high-burden countries to develop national strategies to reduce pneumonia deaths.

• The forum is a major opportunity to ensure that pneumonia is at the forefront of national and global health agendas; galvanise national action, and mobilise the donor community to increase awareness of the scale of the pneumonia challenge.

• The Forum sets out to agree practical pathways that governments and their partners can take to meet the Sustainable Development Goal on child survival and the Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) target of three child pneumonia deaths per 1,000 live births.

• This is not a forum for reflection, but a call to action to deliver concrete measures with the potential to save hundreds of thousands of children’s lives.