

# Fighting pneumonia, the biggest killer of young children

Pneumonia causes around 2 million child deaths per year globally and the burden is especially heavy in a country like Bangladesh, where a third of the population is aged 14 or below.

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The global fight against pneumonia is supported by Sandoz, the generics division of Novartis, which to date has supplied 500,000 treatment courses of a special child formulation of amoxicillin to UNICEF to help children worldwide.



In a poor district of the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, a small army of yellow-robed health workers is engaged in a constant battle against pneumonia, the world's biggest killer of young children. Their distinctive yellow uniforms identify them as representatives of icddr,b, an organization established 50 years ago in Dhaka as the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh.





The health workers help a team of nearly 60 field research assistants dedicated to reducing the death toll from what the World Health Organization calls the forgotten pandemic of pneumonia.



The icddr,b's activities include both academic research and patient care. In the case of pneumonia, the field research assistants visit up to 150 households each week to monitor for signs of the disease.





During their visits, the research assistants gather data that will increase understanding of the causes, transmission and possible prevention of pneumonia. The yellow-clad health workers join them on home visits and also support the clinical team in caring for patients.

**Photo:**

*A research assistant interviews Fatima, the mother of 6-month-old Foysal, who has symptoms of pneumonia.*



Regular monitoring is vital because pneumonia can be treated effectively using appropriate antibiotics such as amoxicillin, but this relies on prompt diagnosis and treatment. All too often,



mothers fail to recognize that symptoms such as fever and rapid breathing could indicate their child has the early stages of the disease.

**Photo:**

*Fatima takes her 6-month-old son Foysal, who has pneumonia, for treatment in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh.*



**Photo:** A blood sample is taken from Foysal at the clinic before he goes to the hospital.



When a suspected pneumonia case is identified, the field teams escort the mother and child to the organization's clinic in Kamalapur, normally traveling by rickshaw – which is the main form of public



transport. More severe cases are referred to the organization's hospital in Dhaka.

**Photo:** *Fatima takes Foysal to the hospital.*



**Photo:** *Foysal later recovered, thanks to antibiotics.*



**Photo:**  
*Mothers wait in a clinic in Dhaka, Bangladesh for treatment for their children, who are suffering from pneumonia.*



Since the founding of the icddr,b, the organisation has expanded its focus to include many of the world's most pressing health concerns, and it now has a global reputation for research into the health challenges faced by developing countries – from infectious diseases to malnutrition and the health effects of climate change.

*Photo: The medical team examines X-rays at the Kamalapur clinic.*

## Using antibiotics to thwart child pneumonia

The global fight against pneumonia is supported by Sandoz, the generics division of Novartis, which to date has supplied 500,000 treatment courses of a special child formulation of amoxicillin to UNICEF to help children worldwide. The medicine was made available as part of the United Nations Every Newborn Action Plan, designed to eliminate preventable deaths among babies.

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