

Vaccine against world's top child killer launched

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A vaccine against pneumonia, the leading cause of child deaths around the world, was rolled out in Kenya Monday and is expected to save hundreds of thousands of lives in coming years.

Pneumococcal disease accounts for 18 percent of child deaths in developing countries, killing more than a million children under the age of five every year, according to the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI).

"Kenya is the first African country to roll-out this pneumococcal conjugate [vaccine](#) which has been specially-tailored to meet the needs of children in developing countries," GAVI said in a statement.

GAVI is a public-private body which brings together UN agencies, the World Bank, philanthropists, the vaccine industry and research agencies to improve children's health through immunisation.

It claims to have prevented more than five million deaths since it was created at the World Economic Forum in 2000.

"Routine vaccination is one of the most cost-effective public health investments a government can make and we are counting on our donors to continue their strong backing for our life-saving mission," said Helen Evans, interim CEO of the GAVI Alliance.

GAVI said the launch of its pneumococcal vaccine, now expected to be

rolled out in more than 40 countries by 2015, was made possible by an innovative finance mechanism.

Close to three billion dollars from donors allowed the acceleration of production capacity from the two contracted manufacturers, securing the supply of vaccines within a year of their introduction in Europe and the United States and at a fraction of the price charged in rich countries.

"The rapid roll-out of new-generation pneumococcal vaccines shows how innovation and technology can be harnessed, at affordable prices, to save lives in the [developing world](#)," World Health Organisation boss Margaret Chan said.

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