

PERU

An Opportunity to Improve the Health of Communities, Women, and Children in the Americas

PARTNERSHIP TO ELIMINATE TRACHOMA AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM

Peru joins regional efforts to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem

More than 180 000 people in three provinces of the department of Loreto need interventions to eliminate trachoma. Most of them are indigenous populations in areas that border on the Brazilian and Colombian Amazon, where there are people affected by this disease.

Peru has included trachoma among its public health priorities and is strengthening its national capacity to support elimination efforts in close coordination with subnational and local health authorities. However, it faces challenges in the implementation of actions to eliminate trachoma in affected populations.



What is ocular trachoma?

Ocular trachoma is an eye infection transmitted by direct contact with people infected with *Chlamydia trachomatis* bacteria.



Recurrent infections in children living in communities with poor access to health services, water, and basic sanitation can lead to **chronic damage**, such as the eyelashes turning inwards. This causes pain and, if left untreated, can lead to visual impairment and blindness in adulthood.

In the Americas, **5.6 million people are at risk of trachoma in four countries (Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru)**. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is promoting efforts to determine whether trachoma is a health problem in other countries in the Region.

How has the problem been addressed in Peru?

The country has made the following progress:

- ▶ **A survey** identified the population affected by trachoma in three provinces in the department of Loreto in 2017. The survey also found that intestinal parasites, anemia, and malnutrition remain health problems in children between the ages 1 and 9 years, and that access to safe water, basic sanitation, and hygiene services is poor in communities there.
- ▶ **Trachoma prevention was included** in the national strategy for the prevention of eye diseases, especially practices to improve face and hand washing.
- ▶ **Surgical interventions** were carried out in people with eye damage caused by trachoma who were identified through the 2017 survey.



What actions will be taken in Peru to step up efforts to eliminate trachoma?

Through the partnership and collaboration between the Ministry of Health of Peru, the Government of Canada, and PAHO, the following actions will be carried out over five years, starting in 2023:

- ▶ Produce national guidelines for trachoma elimination and strengthen local capacities to implement integrated SAFE strategy interventions. These include surgery to correct eye damage, antibiotics to treat infection, promotion of face and hand washing, and improvement of environmental conditions to prevent infection and interrupt transmission.
- ▶ Integrate visual health actions with care for other infectious diseases that affect the same populations.
- ▶ Ensure that SAFE interventions include gender and intercultural approaches to reduce inequities and accelerate elimination efforts.
- ▶ Expand the search for populations affected by trachoma in other areas of the country.

This initiative is aligned with PAHO's initiative for the elimination of communicable diseases and related conditions, which **aims to eliminate more than 30 diseases by 2030**, with a common, integrated, and sustainable approach, promoting linkages and synergies, within the health system and with other sectors.

What are the expected results of the partnership?

183 000 people in three provinces of the department of Loreto will benefit from SAFE strategy interventions and will no longer be at risk of visual impairment and blindness due to trachoma.

National and subnational capacities to provide health services with gender and intercultural approaches will be strengthened.

Peru will have made progress in identifying populations at risk of trachoma in other areas of the country and will be close to confirming that trachoma is no longer a public health problem.

