

# VENEZUELA

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

## **PARTNERSHIP TO ELIMINATE TRACHOMA AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM**

### **Venezuela joins regional efforts to eliminate trachoma as a public health problem**

Venezuela will be conducting epidemiological surveys to determine whether trachoma is a public health problem in populations in 10 geographic areas identified as priorities.

This great effort will follow disease surveillance carried out in indigenous communities in the state of Amazonas in 2018 and 2019, with cases identified in the state of Bolívar.

Trachoma is the leading cause of infectious blindness in the world. It affects people living in vulnerable conditions, especially women and children. In the Americas, Mexico eliminated trachoma in 2017; in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru, about 5.6 million people are at risk of the disease.

As part of the initiative to declare the Americas trachoma-free, actions have been initiated to determine whether other populations are affected by the disease beyond these countries. In Venezuela, epidemiological surveys will help to meet this objective.

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 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.

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

- Within the framework of sustained cooperation between the Ministry of People's Power for Health of Venezuela and the Pan American Health Organization, and through funding from the Government of Canada, epidemiological surveys will be carried out in 10 geographical areas. Based on this information, the interventions to be implemented will be determined. These actions will run for five years, starting in 2023.
- These epidemiological surveys on trachoma will be used to monitor other diseases of interest in the prioritized populations.



## What are the expected results of the partnership?

Data will be available on the prevalence of trachoma in populations in 10 geographical areas of the country. Based on this evidence, it will be determined what actions need to be implemented.

Other diseases of public health interest will be identified that are affecting the communities where the trachoma surveys will be conducted.

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



● Prioritized areas for trachoma assessments

